Priests of My People

Levitical Paradigms for Early Christian Ministers

Bryan A. Stewart

This book offers an innovative examination of the question: why did early Christians begin calling their ministerial leaders "priests" (using the terms *hiereus*/*sacerdos*)? Scholarly consensus has typically suggested that a Christian "priesthood" emerged either from an imitation of pagan priesthood or in connection with seeing the Eucharist as a sacrifice over which a "priest" must preside. This work challenges these claims by exploring texts of the third and fourth century where Christian bishops and ministers are first designated "priests": Tertullian and Cyprian of Carthage, Origen of Alexandria, Eusebius of Caesarea, and the church orders *Apostolic Tradition* and *Didascalia Apostolorum*. Such an examination demonstrates that the rise of a Christian ministerial priesthood grew more broadly out of a developing "religio-political ecclesiology." As early Christians began to understand themselves culturally as a unique *polis* in their own right in the Greco-Roman world, they also saw themselves theologically and historically connected with ancient biblical Israel. This religio-political ecclesiology, sharpened by an emerging Christian material culture and a growing sense of Christian "sacred space," influenced the way Christians interpreted the Jewish Scriptures typologically. In seeing the nation of Israel as a divine nation corresponding to themselves, Christians began appropriating the Levitical priesthood as a figure or "type" of the Christian ministerial office. Such a study helpfully broadens our understanding of the emergence of a Christian priesthood beyond pagan imitation or narrow focus on the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist, and instead offers a more comprehensive explanation in connection with early Christian ecclesiology.

"*Priests of My People* is a fresh contribution to our understanding of the historical development of the 'priesthood.' Bryan A. Stewart shows that the Christian bishop was not, as is commonly held, called priest because he presided at the sacrifice of the Eucharist. Rather it was as head of the community, the new Israel, the Christian *polis* that the term priest came into general usage. This provocative book breaks through the shibboleths that have marked Protestant and Catholic debates to offer an ecumenical understanding of the Christian ministry.

Robert Louis Wilken, William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of the History of Christianity Emeritus, The University of Virginia

Bryan A. Stewart received his B.A. in religion from Grove City College (Grove City, PA) and his M.Div. from Covenant Theological Seminary (St. Louis, MO). He completed his Ph.D. in patristics and early Christianity from the University of Virginia (Charlottesville, VA). After completing his doctoral work, he was awarded a two-year Lilly post-doctoral teaching and research fellowship at Valparaiso University (Valparaiso, IN). Currently Stewart is Associate Professor of Religion at McMurry University (Abilene, TX), where he teaches the history of Christian thought.

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Advance Praise for PRIESTS OF MY PEOPLE

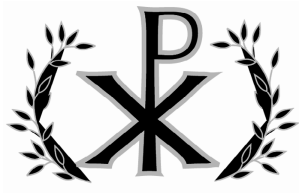
"This book is valuable simply for challenging the widespread assumptions that the Christian 'priesthood' came to be around 200 due to pagan models or to a new understanding of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. Far more than this, however, Bryan A. Stewart demonstrates that the late-second- and early-third-century designation of Christian ministers as 'priests' richly exemplifies development of doctrine—not merely the development of ideas, but rather ideas thoroughly contextualized within Christian material culture, sacred space, and religio-political worldview. As Stewart makes clear, the newly developed typological connections with the Levitical priesthood accord with the trajectory of the New Testament and the Apostolic Fathers, in a manner that prior scholars overlooked. This erudite and rewarding book is a major step forward for those interested in how doctrine developed in the early Church."

Matthew Levering, Perry Family Foundation
Professor of Theology, Mundelein Seminary

"Bryan A. Stewart deploys a supple 'religio-political ecclesiology' and notions of sacred space to explain the emergence of a new, Christian form of priestly leadership in the early church. Understanding the church as itself a *polis* provided the context in which early Christians drew parallels between the Levitical, Aaronic priests of Israel and the new ministers who presided over Christian communities. Stewart's historical case is compelling, and along the way he makes an important contribution to long-standing ecumenical debates concerning the nature and sources of the Christian ministry."

Peter Leithart, President, Theopolis Institute,
Birmingham, Alabama

Priests of My People



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Bryan A. Stewart

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ABBREVIATIONS

Reference and Critical Works

CCSL	*Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina*. Turnhout, 1953–.
CSCO	*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*. Peeters, 1903–.
CSEL	*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*. Vienna, 1866–.
LSJ	Henry George Lidell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, rev. Henry Stuart Jones. 9th ed. Oxford U.P., 1940.
LXX	*Septuaginta*, ed. Alfred Rahlfs. Stuttgart, 1979.
PG	J.-P. Migne, ed. *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Graeca*. Paris, 1857–1912.
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SC	*Sources chrétiennes*. Paris, 1942–.

Early Church Orders

AC	*Les constitutions apostoliques* (*Apostolic Constitutions*), SC 320, 329 (1985–1986)
AT	*La tradition apostolique* (*Apostolic Tradition*), SC 11bis (1984)

DA	*Didascaliae Apostolorum, Canonum Ecclesiasticorum, Traditionis Apostolicae Versiones Latinae*, ed. Erik Tidner (Berlin: 1963)

Works of Tertullian

Apolog.	*Apologeticus (Apology)*, *CCSL* 1 (1954)
Ad Nat.	*Ad Nationes (To the Nations)*, *CCSL* 1 (1954)
Ad Scap.	*Ad Scapulam (To Scapulus)*, *CCSL* 2 (1954)
Cult. Fem.	*De Cultu Feminarum* (*On the Apparel of Women*), *CCSL* 1 (1954)
De Bapt.	*De Baptismo (On Baptism)*, *CCSL* 1 (1954)
De Cor.	*De Corona (On the Crown)*, *CCSL* 2 (1954)
De Fug.	*De Fuga in Persecutione (On Flight from Persecution)*, *CCSL* 2 (1954)
De Idol.	*De Idololatria (On Idolatry)*, *CCSL* 2 (1954)
De Praes.	*De Praescriptione Haereticorum* (*On the Prescription of Heretics*), *CCSL* 1 (1954)
De Virg.	*De Virginibus Velandis* (*On the Veiling of Virgins*), *CCSL* 2 (1954)
De Pud.	*De Pudicitia* (*On Modesty*), *CCSL* 2 (1954)
De Spect.	*De Spectaculis* (*On the Spectacles*), *CCSL* 1 (1954)
Exh. Cast.	*De Exhortatione Castitatis* (*Exhortation to Chastity*), *CCSL* 2 (1954)

Works of Origen of Alexandria

CC	*Contra Celsum* (*Against Celsus*), *SC* 132, 136, 147, 150, 227 (1967–76)
Comm. Jn.	*Commentarii in Evangelium Johannis* (*Commentary on the Gospel of John*), *SC* 120, 157, 222, 290, 385 (1964–92)
Hom. Exod.	*Homiliae in Exodum* (*Homilies on Exodus*), *SC* 321 (1985)
Hom. Jer.	*Homiliae in Jeremiam* (*Homilies on Jeremiah*), *SC* 232, 238 (1976–77)
Hom. Jos.	*Homiliae in Jesu* (*Homilies on Joshua*), *SC* 71 (1960)
Hom. Lev.	*Homiliae in Leviticum* (*Homilies on Leviticus*) *SC* 286–287 (1981)
Hom. Lc.	*Homiliae in Lucam* (*Homilies on Luke*), *SC* 87 (1962)

Hom. Num.	*Homiliae in Numeros* (*Homilies on Numbers*), *SC* 415, 442, 461 (1996–2001)
De Princ.	*De Principiis* (*On First Principles*), *SC* 252, 253, 268, 269, 312 (1978–1984)

Works of Cyprian

Ad Fort.	*Ad Fortunatum* (*To Fortunatus*), *CCSL* 3 (1972)
Dom. Or.	*De Dominica Oratione* (*On the Lord's Prayer*), CCSL 3A (1976)
De Lap.	*De lapsis* (*On the Lapsed*), *CCSL* 3 (1972)
De Unit.	*De catholicae ecclesia unitate* (*On the Unity of the Catholic Church*), *CCSL* 3 (1972)
Ep.	*Epistolae* (*Epistles*), *CCSL* 3B–3C (1994–96)

Works of Eusebius of Caesaria

Dem. Ev.	*Demonstratione Evangelica* (*Demonstration of the Gospel*), *PG* 22 (1857)
H.E.	*Historia Ecclesiastica* (Ecclesiastical History), *SC* 31, 41, 55, 73 (1993–2001)

· 1 ·

INTRODUCTION

In discussing the rise of a Christian ministerial "priesthood" in the early church, it has often been noted, and assiduously repeated, that the New Testament never designates any Christian leader as a "priest" (*hiereus*).[1] By the end of the third century, however, the terms *hiereus* (in the east) and *sacerdos* (in the west) are repeatedly used to designate the bishop and other Christian ministers in a universally accepted way. Yet, in observing the end

1 For example: J.B. Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry* (New York, Whittaker, 1878), 12; J.A.T. Robinson, *On Being the Church in the World* (London: S.C.M. Press, 1960), 72; P.M. Gy, "Notes on the Early Terminology of Christian Priesthood," in *The Sacrament of Holy Orders: Some papers and discussions concerning holy orders at a session of the Centre de pastorale liturgique, 1955* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1962), 98; Jean-Paul Audet, *Structures of Christian Priesthood: A study of home, marriage, and celibacy in the pastoral service of the church*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 81–82; *Sacramentum Mundi*, s.v. "Priest"; James Mohler, *The Origin and Evolution of the Priesthood* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1970), 31; Maurice Bévenot, "Tertullian's Thoughts about the Christian 'Priesthood,'" in *Corona Gratiarum*, vol 1 (Brugge: Sint Pietersabdij, 1970), 126; R.P.C. Hanson, *Christian Priesthood Examined* (Guildford: Lutterworth Press, 1979), 35; Carl Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 32; and James Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church: Public services and offices in the earliest Christian communities* (New York: Cambridge U.P., 1992), 322.

of the third century as a *terminus ad quem* for this general ecclesiastical development, a number of questions remain. When did this designation first appear, and how well accepted was it at the outset? More fundamental, *why* did the term "priest" arise in the church to designate the Christian minister, especially when the New Testament era remains silent on that very count? Was the church creating something ex-nihilo to assert a new understanding of Christian leadership, or was it developing pre-existing understandings? From what model(s) did Christians derive both the designation (*hiereus*/*sacerdos*) and the understanding of roles and functions for the Christian leader?

State of the Question

Questions about the rise of a Christian ministerial priesthood receive no shortage of answers, and scholars for the last one hundred years have attempted to address the subject. Most scholars[2] recognize that Tertullian (c. AD 200) is the first writer to explicitly name the bishop a priest (*sacerdos*). Less agreement is found, however, in the explanation for why that term began to be used for the Christian leader, and what character and function Christians intended to communicate about their leaders by this designation. In surveying the related literature, one is met with a morass of opinions, objections, assertions, and hypotheses; nevertheless, the scholarship typically falls within one of three main categories, each of which attempts to answer the question of *why* the term "priest" came to be applied to the Christian minister in the early church.

Christian Priesthood Emulates Pagan Priesthood

According to this perspective, Christians looked to the surrounding pagan culture for titles of leadership and authority, appropriating the terminology

2 One notable exception: Dom Gregory Dix argues that even in 1 Clement, and in the second century generally, the sacrificial character of the liturgy and the priestly understanding of the 'president' was "universal among the Christian writers of the second century" (Dix, "Ministry in the Early Church," in *The Apostolic Ministry: Essays on the History and Doctrine of the Episcopacy*, ed. K.E. Kirk [London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1947], 247). He has a similar argument in his *Jurisdiction in the Early Church: Episcopal and papal* (London: Church Literature Association, 1975), 36. This seems to misunderstand the force of Clement's argument, which is about "order" not about "titles" or even sacerdotal conceptions. More will be said about this in my conclusion.

"priest" in order to invest their own ministers with a sense of respect and distinction in the eyes of their neighbors. For several scholars, this development took place over time, and represented a divergence from prior models of Christian leadership and authority. According to this line of argument, in their earliest years, Christians saw themselves as a community whose purpose (as a whole) was to approach God as a corporate priestly society; over time, that conception was replaced by a narrower notion that only one part of the community constituted the priesthood, namely, the bishop. As Thomas M. Lindsay explains, by the mid-third century, Christian leaders were attempting to bolster their own authority, while at the same time looking for ways to be treated with the toleration extended to other religions in the empire. Lindsay surveys the organization of the Roman priesthood and concludes: "the Christian churches did copy the great pagan hierarchy. They did so in the distinction introduced into the ranks of bishops by the institution of metropolitans, and grades of bishops, and … on the model of the organization of the state temple service."[3]

In a similar way, James Mohler argues that the rise of "sacerdotalism" in the church occurred when "the old democracy of the synagogue, where the presbyters were generally chosen by the people, gives way to the hierarchical ministry built upon the Roman model…"[4] Even after the decline of paganism in the Roman Empire, suggests Mohler, pagan converts to Christianity would have "felt the need of a cultic priesthood."[5] Thus one can trace the rise of a Christian priesthood directly to the Greco-Roman milieu and its priestly leadership models. The title *hiereus* and *sacerdos* carried important social distinction in the Roman world, and Christians intentionally applied these terms to their own leaders in order to gain prestige for themselves.[6]

Allen Brent is the most recent proponent of finding connections between Christian leadership and pagan, Roman models. In his work, *The Imperial Cult and the Development of Church Order*, Brent explains the development of the Imperial Cult under Augustus as an attempt to retain the *pax deorum* through a "reorganization" of the Republican cult. In turn, argues Brent, the Christian

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3 Thomas M. Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1902), 350.

4 Mohler, *Priesthood*, 69.

5 Mohler, *Priesthood*, 104.

6 See also R.P.C. Hanson for a discussion of this possibility: *Christian Priesthood Examined*, 43–45; and Hanson, *Studies in Christian Antiquity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1985), 130.

church, having been "deprived of status and significance by the wider culture, sets up its own contra-culture that mirrors and reverses the values of the former, granting the status and significance to its members that the former had denied them."[7] This thesis is carried forward in even more detail in his recent work, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage*. Although this work explores ecclesiastical authority in terms broader than mere "priesthood," Brent's argument about the third-century conception of Christian leadership in general applies to notions of the bishop as *sacerdos* as well. For Brent, "the rights and prerogatives of the bishop at the pinnacle of the ecclesiastical hierarchy were to be understood in terms of the categories of power and authority of the Roman political constitution and their sacralization."[8] Like Lindsay and Mohler before, Brent seeks for an understanding of early Christian conceptions of leadership by positing an appropriation of political and cultic Roman models of authority.

While at first glance this argument appears reasonable, a number of problems remain. For example, Brent's work on the *Imperial Cult*, while provocative, draws primarily upon evidence taken from the New Testament and sub-apostolic documents, the very period in which most scholars find an *absence* of priestly designations being applied to Christian leaders. Thus, the evidence here suggests that if conceptions of church leadership were mirroring pagan models, priesthood was decidedly *not* one of the models in view.[9]

Moreover, the evidence we do have from early Christian writers suggests that they were, in fact, not intentionally drawing upon and imitating pagan, priestly models of leadership. Christians of the second and third centuries were attempting to move away from, not embrace, the surrounding pagan culture. Even Justin Martyr, who is at pains to show the reasonableness of Christianity to his pagan audience, never calls the president of worship a *hiereus*, even though he has an appropriate opportunity to do so in *1 Apology* 65–67. Likewise, Tertullian shows great caution in never using the term *pontifex* to describe a Christian bishop (except in one case in which his tone is sarcastic). Only after Constantine, when paganism does begin to lose ground, do Christians of the fourth century begin to us terms like *pontifex*, *koryphaios*,

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7 Allen Brent, *The Imperial Cult and the Development of Church Order: Concepts and Images of Authority in Paganism and Early Christianity Before the Age of Cyprian* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), xxi.

8 Allen Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2010), 4.

9 Brent's argument in his most recent work on Cyprian will be given fuller treatment in chapter 6.

and *hierophant* to describe their leaders.[10] The lack of use of these later titles by third-century Christians suggests that they were not using pagan models (and perhaps intentionally avoiding them) to describe their leaders.

Furthermore, there are certain striking differences between pagan and Christian priesthoods. As Simon Price notes in *Religions of the Ancient Greeks*, women in antiquity were able to be priests;[11] Christians, however, restricted their priesthood to men. Certain priesthoods in ancient times were restricted to particular family lineage;[12] Christians decidedly excluded such qualifications for their priesthood. The duties of pagan priests were restricted by and large to offering sacrifice;[13] Christian priests, however, performed a full array of tasks such as baptizing, teaching, administering penance, and so on. Price further notes that priests in antiquity were not interpreters of the law (that was left to the diviners and *exegetai*);[14] Christian priests, on the other hand, were routinely responsible for regular instruction and teaching. In the end, these are noticeable and significant differences between pagan and Christian priesthoods, and the suggestion that early Christians developed their ministerial priesthood from Roman models remains unpersuasive. Other solutions must be sought.

Christian Priesthood Represents Christ's High Priesthood

Whereas the previous argument attempts to place the historical development of a Christian priesthood within the historical milieu in which it arose, this second perspective tends toward more theological reasoning. John Zizioulas, Joseph Coppens, and Albert Vanhoye, each in their various ways, explore the theological rationale for the emergence of a Christian ministerial priesthood out of Christ's own priesthood. Zizioulas, for example, while not specifically addressing the development of Christian priesthood, argues for the bishop as an *alter Christus* because "the ministries that exist are antitypes and mystical radiations of the very authority of Christ, the only minister par excellence."[15]

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10 Surprisingly, Hanson, a proponent of the Roman model for Christian priesthood, points out this very fact (*Christian Priesthood Examined*, 64).

11 Simon Price, *Religions of the Ancient Greeks* (New York: Cambridge U.P., 1999), 68.

12 Price, *Religions*, 68.

13 Price, *Religions*, 68.

14 Price, *Religions*, 70–71.

15 John Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop during the First Three Centuries*, trans. Elizabeth Theokritoff (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001), 60.

Jospeh Coppens explains the later development of a Christian priesthood in reference to Christ. He argues that Christ's ministry in the New Testament was one of priestly nature; therefore, whatever he passes to his disciples as appointed representatives (*shaliah*) also carries this priestly power with it.[16] Likewise, Albert Vanhoye examines the New Testament (and the book of Hebrews in particular) to conclude that Christ's own high priesthood became the theological basis for the emergence of Christian priesthood. Once Christ's high priesthood is well developed and accepted, attributing a priestly character to Christian ministers becomes possible.[17] Like Zizioulas, however, Coppens and Vanhoye provide no actual historical or textual evidence that this was in fact what later writers had in mind when they began designating their leaders "priests."[18]

Thus, while this theological perspective on the development of a ministerial priesthood seems plausible, an examination of the textual evidence reveals that the writers who first began to use priestly language for Christian ministers tended not to draw upon Christ's priesthood as an explanation. In fact, Tertullian and the *Apostolic Tradition*, the two earliest examples of Christian bishops being called priests, designate the bishop *summus sacerdos* (high priest), not just *sacerdos*. The connection with Christ, the *summus sacerdos*, does not seem to be in view for these early writers. If such a link did influence these early writers, one would expect them to avoid designating the bishop with a title so uniquely Christ's.

Further, the book of Hebrews (from which we get the strongest articulation of Jesus as high priest) seems to play little to no role on this issue in the western church until the middle of the fourth century, and was not very

16 Jospeh Coppens, *Le sacerdoce chrétien: ses origines et développement* (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 245.

17 Albert Vanhoye, *Old Testament Priests and the New Priest: According to the New Testament* (Petersham MA: St. Bede's Pub., 1986), 316.

18 The few authors who do offer more textual evidence for such a development, do so only in light of Cyprian. Maurice Bévenot and John Laurance, for example, both argue that for Cyprian, the bishop was a *sacerdos* because he was a type of Christ, the true high priest, presiding over the Eucharist (Bévenot,"'Sacerdos' as Understood by Cyprian," *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 30 (1979): 421–423; and John D. Laurance, '*Priest' as Type of Christ: The Leader of the Eucharist in Salvation History according to Cyprian of Carthage* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984). These works provide a better examination of textual evidence in Cyprian, but do not intend to make claims more broadly for understanding the development of a Christian ministerial priesthood in the third and fourth centuries.

prominent in the eastern church until the third century.[19] Certainly Tertullian and the *Apostolic Tradition* do not appear to draw upon this book or these ideas to develop the priesthood of the bishop. In short, this perspective, although theologically compatible with the New Testament, does not do justice to the Christian writers who first designate the bishop as a priest. A third option, however, remains.

Christian Priests as Presiders over the Eucharistic Sacrifice

By far, the best-accepted and most frequently repeated approach has been to explain the development of the Christian priesthood in connection with the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist. Once the Eucharist is seen as a sacrifice, the argument runs, the one who presides over the sacrifice is in some sense a "priest."[20]

As early as 1874, Charles Drake posited such a connection, averring that "if a sacrificial view of the Eucharist prevailed in the church from the first, a sacerdotal view of the Christian Ministry must have prevailed in the same degree, and to the same extent."[21] That same century, J.B. Lightfoot followed

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19 For a discussion of the influence of the book of Hebrews on the Fathers, see Hanson, *Christian Priesthood Examined*, 41–42. He also notes that when Christ's high priesthood is asserted in these centuries, Zech. 3:1–5 is the passage used, not Hebrews. Thus, while Christ's high-priesthood was assumed during this period, it was not very well-developed or applied to an understanding of the Christian priesthood.

20 Examples of this line of argument abound. Encyclopedic entries include: *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., s.v. "Priest"; and *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 3rd ed., s.v.v. "Bischof" and "Priester." Authors who make this suggestion in passing, without further examination, include: Hanson, *Christian Priesthood Examined*, 52–58, but mostly looking at Cyprian; Hanson, "Concept of Office," 129; J. Daniélou, "The Priestly Ministry in the Greek Fathers," in *The Sacrament of Holy Orders: Some papers and discussions concerning holy orders at a session of the Centre de Pastorale Liturgique, 1955* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1962), 125; Richard Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 172; Robert Murray, "Christianity's 'Yes' to Priesthood," in *The Christian Priesthood*, eds. Nicholas Lash and Joseph Rhymer (Denville, N.J., Dimension Books, 1970), 30. John Grindel, **"**Old Testament and Christian Priesthood" *Communio* 3 (1976): 36; Ray Robert Noll, *Christian Ministerial Priesthood: A search for its beginning in the primary documents of the Apostolic Fathers* (San Francisco: Catholic Scholars Press, 1993), 44; and Bernard Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacraments: History and Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 541.

21 Charles Drake, *The Teaching of the Church During the First Three Centuries on the Doctrines of the Christian Priesthood and Sacrifice* (London: Macmillan, 1874), 141.

Drake in an attempt to explain the early Christian shift toward a ministerial priesthood, a shift that, for the low-church Anglican, "contradicts the general tenor of the Gospel."[22] He summarizes his explanation: "The offering of the eucharist, being regarded as the one special act of sacrifice, and appearing externally to the eyes as the act of the officiating minister, might well lead to the minister being called a priest… and the true position of the minister as the representative of the congregation was lost sight of."[23]

The twentieth century, particularly the decades of the 1960's and 1970's, ushered in repeated consideration of the causes and meaning of a ministerial priesthood in connection with sacrificial themes. Scholars disagreed about the theological legitimacy of such a development, but the overwhelming consensus was that a Christian ministerial priesthood had its origins in the emergence of the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist.[24] P. M. Gy, for example, identifies AD 200 as the first clear attestation of priestly designations for Christian ministers, and points to sacrificial connections as the explanation: "Christians of the sub-apostolic period nowhere explain why they developed a terminology with which the New Testament had wished to break, but the texts show us clearly that the idea of priesthood was developed at the same time as that of sacrifice, and in conjunction with it."[25]

Willy Rordorf, Hans von Campenhausen, Raymond Brown, and J.M.R. Tillard all echo both this connection and the timeline for the development of the eucharist as sacrifice. Rordorf, for example, comments: "I am persuaded that this change of perspective was produced in connection with the fact that, in the course of the second century, the Lord's Supper had obtained the character of a sacrifice, and that this development had favored the identification of the bishop presiding over the Lord's Supper and the sacrificing priest of the Old Testament."[26] Likewise, Brown argues that "the Christian priesthood, replacing the priesthood of Israel, emerged only when the Eucharist came to

22 Lightfoot, *Ministry*, 110.

23 Lightfoot, *Ministry*, 138–139.

24 For a slightly earlier treatment of this theme, see Dix, *Jurisdiction*, 37–38; and Dix, "Ministry in the Early Church," 249.

25 Gy, "Terminology," 113–114.

26 "Je suis persuadé que ce changement d'optique s'est produit en rapport aussi avec le fait que la Sainte-Cène a pris au cours du second siècle le caractère d'un sacrifice, et que cela a favorisé l'identification de l'évêque présidant à la Sainte-Cène et du prêtre sacrifiant de l'Ancien Testament." Willy Rordorf, "La théologie du ministère dans l'église ancienne," *Verbum Caro* 18 no. 71–72 (1964): 98.

be understood as an un-bloody sacrifice replacing the bloody sacrifices of the Temple."[27] This happens, according to Brown, in the second century.[28]

That consensus has continued to be carried forward to our present day, such that the 1993 sentiment of Robert Ray Noll remains representative of the scholarly opinion on the subject: "The texts also show us clearly that the idea of priesthood was developed at the same time as that of sacrifice and in conjunction with it."[29] Thus the connection between priesthood and the Eucharist as sacrifice has become the most accepted scholarly explanation for the rise of a Christian ministerial priesthood.

Ostensibly, this explanation for the development of the priesthood seems reasonable. Because the patristic texts themselves reveal that a major function of the bishop-priest was to offer the Eucharistic sacrifice, the conclusion that a Christian priesthood arose from this connection follows logically. However, as important a role as the sacrificial Eucharist must play in the development of priesthood, there are reasons to suggest this cannot be the full explanation.

The biggest weakness in this logic is the chronological distance between the Christian expression of the Eucharist as sacrifice and the rise of the title "priest" to designate the Christian leader. The Eucharist was understood as a "sacrifice" from the beginning. It is very clear, as Robert Daly so forcefully demonstrates in his work, *Christian Sacrifice: the Judaeo-Christian background before Origen*, that the earliest Christian writers *all* saw the Eucharist in sacrificial terms.[30] Within the second century, the *Didache*, I Clement, Ignatius

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27 Raymond Brown, *Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflections* (Paramus: Paulist Press, 1970), 40.

28 For other prominent works making the same connection between Eucharistic sacrifice and a ministerial priesthood, see Hans von Campenhausen, "Die Anfänge des Priesterbegriffs in der alten Kirche," in *Tradition und Leben: Kräfte der Kirchengeschichte*, ed. ibid (Tübingen: Mohr, 1960), 272–289; J.M.R. Tillard, "La 'qualité sacerdotale' du ministère chrétien," *Nouvelle Revue Theologie* 95 (1973): 481–514; Edward Kilmartin, "Pastoral Office and the Eucharist," *Emmanuel* 82 (1976): 312–318; and Theodore Stylianopoulos, "Holy Eucharist and Priesthood in the New Testament," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 23 (1978): 113–130.

29 Noll, *Ministerial Priesthood*, 44, quoting Gy; see n. 25. For similar recent treatments, see Carl Volz, *Pastoral Life and Practice in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990); Nelson, *Faithful Priest*; and Colin Bulley, *The Priesthood of Some Believers: Developments from the General to the Special Priesthood in the Christian Literature of the First Three Centuries* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2000).

30 Robert Daly, *Christian Sacrifice: the Judaeo-Christian Background before Origen* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1978), esp. 498–508. See also Frances Young, *Sacrifice and the Death of Christ* (London: SPCK, 1975), 47–63.

of Antioch, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus all speak very clearly about the Eucharist as a sacrifice (without a ministerial priesthood). Yet, even earlier, the Lord's Supper is already being connoted in sacrificial terms by Paul.[31] In other words, the Christian movement, from its inception onward, understood the Eucharist to be a "sacrifice" in some sense of the word. Yet, it is not until the early third century that Christians began designating the Eucharistic leader of the Christian assembly a "priest." If in fact the Eucharist was the sole cause or catalyst for the rise of priestly designations, why do these designations not appear earlier, in conjunction with the sacrificial understanding of the Eucharist? In other words, this option does not adequately explain the empire-wide eruption, acceptance, and continuation of the priestly terminology within the church from the early third century onward.

Most scholars who see a Eucharist-priesthood connection argue one of two ways. Either they argue that sacrifice and priesthood both developed late and arose together at the same time, or they allow for an early articulation of the Eucharist as a sacrifice, but assume a similarly early ministerial priesthood without any textual evidence. The problem with the former argument is that the Eucharist was understood as a sacrifice much earlier than the rise of the priestly designations. The latter argument suffers from the lack of any explicit priestly designations in the late-first, early-second century, allowing for only a "phantom" priesthood to correspond with the earlier Eucharistic sacrifice.

More important, however, the priesthood-Eucharist connection does not hold largely because the earliest writers employing ministerial priesthood language tend not to emphasize the Eucharistic sacrifice as the main role of the Christian minister as priest. As Colin Bulley notes, there are a "variety of major connotations which priestliness could have in the third century A.D."[32] Moreover, the sacrifice of the Eucharist receives little attention in Tertullian, the *Apostolic Tradition*, Origen, or *Didascalia Apostolorum*, some of the earliest witnesses to the Christian minister as "priest."

From the reverse side, there are plenty of texts that speak of the Eucharist as sacrifice and the bishop's role as the president of this rite, with no mention of an understanding of the bishop as a "priest." Given these problems with the current state of scholarship, the need remains for a more adequate explanation for the development of the Christian priesthood.

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31 See for example, 1 Corinthians 10. I will address this point more fully in my conclusion.

32 Bulley, *Priesthood*, 132.

Religio-Political Ecclesiology: A Way Forward

While scholars have correctly recognized the notion of the Eucharist as sacrifice in some early Christian discussion of the functions of the Christian ministerial priesthood, none have emphasized or fully explored the importance of the early church's cultural self-understanding in relation both to Judaism and the broader Roman Empire—what I will term its *religio-political ecclesiology*—in fashioning both its identity and, consequently, its understanding of Christian ministerial leadership. Moreover, a number of scholars have assumed a dramatic disjunct between the hierarchical (and priestly) developments in the third century and the teaching and practice of the church in the first two centuries.[33] By approaching the question of the Christian priesthood from the perspective of the church's religio-political ecclesiology, we can see more clearly that the rise of a ministerial priesthood in the late-second, early-third century is both an important *new development*, yet also an important *advancement* of previous trajectories. As R.P.C. Hanson notes, "Priesthood, when it entered into Christian tradition, was a development, but a development of doctrine, of interpretation, rather than the development of a new institution."[34] The Christian priesthood forms as the result of theological consideration upon the existing office of bishop in light of the church's self-understanding (its religio-political ecclesiology) within the world.

Church as a Culture or Polis

Although a range of issues could be addressed in examining the rise of a ministerial priesthood in early Christianity, this project will focus particularly on the relationship between an emerging ministerial priesthood and the church's religio-political ecclesiology within the broader Jewish and Greco-Roman

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33 For example, Gy says, "Christians of the sub-apostolic period nowhere explain why they adopted a terminology with which the New Testament had wished to break" ("Terminology," 113); and *Sacramentum Mundi* argues that the New Testament shows "obvious opposition to the OT priesthood…" (s.v. "Priest"). Other scholars who share this perspective include: Paul Bradshaw, *Liturgical Presidency in the Early Church* (Bramcote: Grove Books, 1983), 15–18; J.M.R. Tillard, "La 'qualité sacerdotale," 498; Lindsay, *Church and Ministry*, 266; Nelson, *Faithful Priest*, 171; Lightfoot, *Ministry*, 111, 143; Cooke, *Ministry*, 79, 537; Burtchaell, *Synagogue to Church*, 321; and Audet, *Structures*, 79.

34 Hanson, *Christian Priesthood Examined*, 96.

milieu. First, I will examine the notion that the church understood itself as a *polis* or "culture" in its own right, distinct from the surrounding cultures of the empire. Scholars such as David Yeago, Reinhard Hütter, Robert Wilken, and Peter Leithart have shown that the social reality of Christian symbols, rituals, communal gatherings, organization, public worship space, art, literature, and leadership structures, all formed a developing "Christian culture" which set the church apart as an alternate society in the Roman world.[35]

What, however, does it mean to speak of "culture?" A definition is, of course, a slippery thing, even among those who study "cultures" around the world. Robert Winthrop, for example, has admitted that within the field of anthropology, "multiple and conflicting definitions of culture are notorious."[36] Scholars have offered a wide array of definitions which include a community's "patterns of thought," "a set of standards for behavior considered authoritative within a society," or "a system of meanings through which social life is interpreted;" others have rejected the idea of "culture" altogether.[37] David Yeago's work proves especially helpful here, and I will be utilizing his definition of culture throughout: culture is "a complex of symbols and practices, communally acknowledged as significant, enclosed within an overarching meta-narrative, which shapes the perceptions, experience, [behavior], and sense of identity of a community."[38] In other words, to speak of the church as a culture is different than speaking of Christianity as a set of abstract beliefs or ideas. Rather, the "church as culture" is a way of identifying a community that embodies a public, visible reality in the world, sharing certain perceptions, rites, practices, customs, offices and leadership, all the while embracing an overarching "story" that shapes that very community.[39] When Christians speak about their

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35 David S. Yeago, "Messiah's People: The Culture of the Church in the Midst of the Nations," *Pro Ecclesia* 6 (1997): 146–171; Reinhard Hütter, "The Church as Public: Dogma, Practice, and the Holy Spirit," *Pro Ecclesia* 3 (1994): 334–361; Robert Wilken, "Church as Culture," *First Things* 142 (2004): 31–36; and Peter Leithart, *Against Christianity* (Moscow, Idaho: Canon Press, 2003).

36 Robert Winthrop, "Introduction: Culture and the Anthropological Tradition," in *Culture and the Anthropological Tradition*, ed. ibid. (New York: University Press of America, 1990), 1.

37 Winthrop, "Culture," 2–4.

38 Yeago, "Messiah's People," 150. I have added "behavior" to the definition because how a community acts is just as important to a "culture" as "perceptions, experience, and sense of identity."

39 This is what is meant by the term "meta-narrative": the overarching story which shapes the community.

beliefs, ritual actions, community values and practices, or structures of leadership, they are giving witness to a "culture"—a public social reality in the empire.

Furthermore, as anthropologist Clifford Geertz observes, this complex of symbols and practices in a religious culture works both to "express the world's climate and [to] shape it."[40] This is no less true when we look at Christian ministerial leadership and the appropriation of priestly designations. The emergence of a ministerial priesthood is both a reflection of an existing worldview, and also a living symbol that will continue to shape that very self-understanding of the community.[41] To put it another way, the practices of the church and the functions of the bishop led to renewed consideration of the community's self-understanding in light of Israel and the Roman world; yet as this self-understanding developed and grew, it also began to influence the way Christians described the very practice and functions of the office. Designating the Christian bishop as a priest had as much to do with the functions of the bishop (i.e. practice) as it did with the church's broader self-identity in the world (i.e. its ecclesiology). It is this later aspect, ecclesiology, which has often been ignored in the historical discussion of Christian priesthood; on the other hand, ministerial function, or practice, of a Christian priesthood has tended to receive the bulk of scholarly attention. My intention is to examine both aspects of priesthood (functions and ecclesiology) as a means to further understand this sacerdotal development, while also recognizing the two-way influence at work—that while ecclesiology shapes practice, practice can also further develop and clarify ecclesiology.

One might object, however, that this definition of culture does not ground the Christian social reality in traditional "cultural" elements such as geography, ethnicity, language and so on. This is true; yet as Geertz and Yeago have both demonstrated, a culture need not have those aspects so long as symbols, practices and overarching "stories" exist within the community. Yeago, for

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40 For a broader discussion of the way symbols and practices work in religious communities, see Clifford Geertz, "Religion as a Cultural System," in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ed. Michael Banton (London: Tavistock Pub, 1963), 9.

41 The cultural symbols used by Christians such as Israel, altar, sacrifice, temple and priesthood express both a certain cultural reality about the church but also continue to shape and develop that very reality over time, as we will see. "Priesthood" for example, initially expresses a certain reality and understanding within the church; over time, such nomenclature will inevitably affect other cultural understandings in the community (for example, seeing the church building as a Temple).

example, uses the illustration of what was once known as an "American civic culture."[42] He notes that members of this culture shared certain symbols such as the American flag and the Declaration of Independence, as well as certain practices such as voting, pledging allegiance and singing the national anthem. Additionally, these shared symbols and practices were encompassed within a larger narrative—the retold story of how this country was founded, fought over, and established anew. Figures such as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Paul Revere and Betsy Ross became communally shared stories of the American civic culture which was then "reaffirmed in solemn civic liturgies on the Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, and the birthdays of the great presidents."[43] This reality, though not based primarily on ethnicity, was nonetheless a "culture" in its own right.

The early Christian church, likewise, embodied analogically its own "culture" with shared symbols, practices and an overarching story. Thus, part of what I am arguing is that the church developed a conscious awareness of itself as a unique *polis*, or culture, distinct from the surrounding cultures, an alternate society complete with symbols (e.g. bread and wine, water, the cross, Israel) and practices (e.g. communal gatherings, baptism, eucharist) governed by certain rules and, of course, leadership. As I will show, the development of the church's understanding of its leadership was part of its development in understanding itself as an alternate society, a *polis* which needed to be ruled, governed and protected just as any other *polis* in the empire.

Religio-Political Continuity with Israel

The first aspect of this Christian religio-political ecclesiology lies in the church's understanding of itself in connection with Israel. As defined earlier, the church as a culture included symbols and practices embodied in an overarching narrative. The Jewish Scriptures, and the events and history of Israel contained within those Scriptures, became the "symbols" and "overarching narrative" for the culture of the church. In turn, these symbols helped shape the community's understanding of itself in the world.[44] When the church read the Scriptures, they implicitly identified the story of Israel as its story. As

42 See Yeago, "Messiah's People," 151.

43 Yeago, "Messiah's People," 151.

44 See Geertz, "Religion," 3, for his discussion of the dynamic between symbols, ethos and worldview.

George Lindbeck remarks, "Israel's story, transposed into a new key through Christ, became prototypical for the history of the church" such that Israel's story became "a template which help[ed] shape Christian communities."[45] Thus the church's ecclesiology had both a political edge to it (seeing itself as an alternate society in the Roman world) and a religious edge to it (seeing itself as in some sense connected to Israel). Together, this self-understanding of the church is its *religio-political ecclesiology*.

As a result, then, when ancient Christian writers looked at Israel, they saw a divine nation corresponding to their own cultural reality in the world. "The *ekklesia*," as Yeago says, "is nonetheless precisely the same narrative subject as the Old Testament people of God."[46] When Christians looked to the old covenant priesthood, they saw a figure and model for their own leadership. Finally, when they considered their own leadership, they understood the Levitical paradigm as a useable "typology" for the Christian office. In this way, their religio-political ecclesiology influenced their understanding of Christian ministry.

This connection between a Christian ministerial priesthood and its connection with the Israelite priesthood has been acknowledged by some;[47] however, none of the scholars who have suggested this link have done much in the way of careful examination of the Patristic texts themselves regarding the relationship between priesthood and ecclesiological self-identity. Some scholars like P.M. Gy, Dom Botte, F.L. Cross and J. Schmitt have all noted, for example, the use of Old Testament texts by the Fathers to support the understanding of the character and function of the Christian priest, but they offer no further reflection as to why the church began to do this in the early

45 George Lindbeck, "The Church," in *Keeping the Faith: Essays to Mark the Centenary of Lux Mundi*, ed. Geofrrey Wainwright (London: S.P.C.K., 1989), 184, 190.

46 Yeago, "Messiah's People," 155.

47 Dom Botte, "Holy Order in the Ordination prayers," in *The Sacrament of Holy Orders: Some papers and discussions concerning holy order at a session of the Centre de Pastorale Liturgique, 1955* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1962), 21; J. Schmitt, "Jewish Priesthood and Christian Hierarchy in the Early Palestinian Communities," in *The Sacrament of Holy Order: Some papers and discussions concerning holy order at a session of the Centre de Pastorale Liturgique, 1955* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1962), 60; F. L. Cross, "Priesthood in the Early Church," in *Priesthood*, ed. H.S. Box (New York: Macmillan, 1937), 82; Gy, "Terminology," 113; Hanson, *Christian Priesthood Examined*, 45–46; Noll, *Priesthood*, 43; and Lindsay, *Church and Ministry*, 34–35.

third century. That such ancient writers rely so heavily on Old Testament priesthood texts suggests further examination in this direction.[48]

From a more theological perspective, scholars such as A. E. J. Rawlinson, Theodore Stylianopoulos, Joseph Ratzinger, and John Zizioulas have intimated at, or explicitly identified, the connection between Israel and the church as a major factor in priestly developments in the church.[49] Typically, these works, although theologically insightful, lack historical and textual evidence to substantiate such conclusions; their intuitive claims, however, call for more serious examination in the ancient Christian writers themselves to see if such an ecclesiology lies behind priestly designations.[50]

Richard Norris' comments prove extremely helpful in pointing in this direction. He recognizes that as the office of bishop developed it "became the subject not merely of customary and canonical regulation, but also of theological reflection," that is, it came to be understood in connection with the church's "place and role in the economy of salvation."[51] Although Norris does not make direct application upon the priesthood issue here, his insight points in the right direction to consider how the church saw itself in the divine economy (e.g. "people of God" or "Israel") which in turn illuminated how it saw its ministers. No comprehensive examination of this idea has yet been undertaken.

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48 Other scholars have noted that some interaction or tension with Judaism may have played a part in priestly developments, but textual and historical examinations, to date, have been rather brief and general. R.P.C. Hanson, Ray Robert Noll, Robert Murray and James Burtchaell, for example, have all suggested that the dynamic presented in Jewish-Christian tensions played some role in the formation of Christian organization and hierarchy, but the rise of a Christian priesthood, proper, is rarely treated. I will touch on this issue periodically in certain chapters as warranted.

49 A. E. J. Rawlinson, "Priesthood and Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity," *Expository Times* 60 (1949): 119; Theodore Stylianopoulos, "Holy Eucharist and Priesthood in the New Testament," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 23 (1978): 128; Joseph Ratzinger, "Biblical Foundations of Priesthood," *Communio* 17 (1990): 617–27; and Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, 46–48.

50 For a few exceptions to the lack of historical investigation on this angle, see Dix, *Jurisdiction*, 32–34 and Hans von Campenhausen, regarding Origen in particular (*Kirchliches Amt und geistliche Vollmacht in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1963], 281–289).

51 Richard Norris, "The Beginnings of Christian Priesthood," *Anglican Theological Review* 66 Supplemental Series 9 (1984): 27.

One may object, of course, that this ecclesiological understanding of the church in relation to Israel existed from the beginning of the Christian movement. While true, more recent scholarship has indicated that the tension between Judaism and Christianity did not end in the first century. In fact, the dynamics of Jewish-Christian interaction, dialogue and understanding of "Israel" continued well into the fourth century. Scholars like Marcel Simon, Robert Wilken, Daniel Boyarin, and others have demonstrated this point well.[52] This is important for my argument as well; in recognizing the development of a Levitical priestly model for Christian leadership, one must not neglect or underestimate the importance of the on-going dynamic between Christianity and Judaism of its time, particularly the attempt by Christians to establish themselves in continuity with Israel, yet in distinction from their contemporary Jews.[53]

In addition, certain scholars have come to see that while the Temple destruction in AD 70 was significant for both Jewish and Christian self-understanding, it was not until after AD 135 in the Bar Kochba revolt that a more certain shift in self-understanding took place with respect to Christian regard for Judaism and God's intentions and stance toward the Jews.[54] Furthermore, the role of Marcion in the Jewish-Christian debate must be considered as well. As those like Marcion pushed to further distance Christianity from Judaism and the Jewish Scriptures, others in the church reacted with a recovery of the emphasis on *continuity* with Israel by

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52 Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: Étude sur les relations entre chrétiens et juifs dans l'empire romain (135–425)* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1964); Robert Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind: A Study of Cyril of Alexandrias Exegesis and Theology* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1971), esp.9–28; ibid., *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1983); Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

53 I will not spend a lot of time on this issue, but I will explore it in certain texts where such investigation proves illuminating.

54 See for example, Mohler, *Priesthood*, 49; Brown, *Priest and Bishop*, 18; Alexandre Faivre, *Ordonner la fraternité: pouvoir d'innover et retour à l'ordre dans l'église ancienne* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1992), 78–79; Kenneth Clark suggests that the Temple cult was still in operation in Jerusalem until 135, and that Christians prior to 135 still seem to hold a certain respect for the sacrifice in Jerusalem ("Worship in Jerusalem Temple after 70 A.D.," *NTS* 6 no.4 [1960], 269–80); James Dunn, *Jews and Christians: the parting of the ways A.D. 70 to 135* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1992); and Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians, 70–170 C.E.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995.

appropriating Old Testament language and Israelite institutions more fully. Only in affirming both continuity with Israel, and transformation of it, could the church retain the Jewish Scriptures and its self-designation as "Israel." Yet, in affirming this ecclesiology, the church also enabled the fuller appropriation and application of certain Jewish texts such as the Levitical institution of the priesthood.[55]

As the following chapters will demonstrate, these historical occasions regarding the Jewish-Christian dynamic ultimately led to a religio-political ecclesiology which affirmed a continuity with, yet transformation of Israel, fulfilled and perfected in Christ and his church. As that further-defined ecclesiological self-identity took root, it allowed for the continued appropriation of Jewish texts such as those regarding Israelite priestly leadership. The particular roles and functions of the Christian minister will play a part in understanding the bishop as a "priest," but this underlying religio-political ecclesiology offers the more important impetus toward the emergence of a Christian ministerial priesthood, built explicitly around the typology of the ancient Levitical priesthood as found in Israel's history.

A Christian Material Culture and Sacred Space

One may argue, of course, that the notion of the church as a cultural entity in continuity with ancient Israel existed already from the very beginning of the Christian movement. While that is true, something decidedly new arose in the late-second, early-third century. The development of a distinctly Christian "material culture" at this time gave rise to a more robust, visible, and "public" dimension to Christianity. The development of Christian art and architecture produced the possibility of a new stage in the church's self-understanding, its religio-political ecclesiology expressed and represented in more concrete ways, as well as an emerging understanding of "sacred space." By post-Constantinian times, the eruption of Christian church buildings and a distinctly Christian material culture provided overwhelming evidence of Christian sacred space during the fourth century and beyond. Eusebius of Caesarea's panegyric at the dedication of the church in Tyre, to cite just one example, likens the new church building to the sanctuary (*hagiastērion*) and temple (*neōs*) of ancient Israel, complete with "sacred areas" (*hieroi*) and an "altar in the midst of the

55 Note for example, that it was not until the mid-third century, with Origen, that a full homiletic treatment of Leviticus was even attempted by the church.

holy of holies" (*to tōn hagiōn hagion thysiastērion en mesōi theis*).[56] Yet even earlier, within the third century, that shift toward Christian sacred space begins to appear. During periods of persecution, Christians' reluctance to hand over Eucharistic vessels, their evolving use and position of furniture inside worship space, and the restriction of the Eucharistic meal to the baptized, all suggest a growing sacralization of Christian worship space.

Archeologically, a number of scholars such as Richard Krautheimer, Paul Corby Finney, and L. Michael White have identified the early third century as marking the emergence of a new Christian material culture, including identifiable Christian worship space—buildings either renovated or erected for the purpose of Christian liturgy and ritual.[57] White's findings, for example, suggest that the Christian assembly shifted from house-church meeting places to the *domus ecclesiae* roughly between AD 180–200.[58] In the house-church stage, Christians met for worship in buildings that were also used as domiciles. Between AD 180–200, however, Christians began to purchase and renovate existing buildings or build new structures for the sole purpose of public Christian worship. The most well-known example of such emerging material culture and sacred space is the house church in Syrian Dura Europos, a former domicile procured by the Christian community and renovated and adapted solely for Christian use as worship space. An interior wall was removed to create a larger assembly room; and another room in the house was elaborately decorated and made into a baptistery.[59] Likewise, the catacombs and titular churches in Rome offer additional archeological evidence for the emergence of distinctly Christian space and material culture in the early third century.[60]

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56 Eusebius of Caesaria, *Ecclesiastical History* 10.4.37–44, *SC* 55: 93–96.

57 See Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965), 3–12; Paul Corby Finney, *The Invisible God: The Earliest Christians on Art* (New York: Oxford U.P., 1994); and L. Michael White, *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture*, vol. 1 (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1996), 18–20.

58 White, *Social Origins*, vol. 1, 3–12, 117–118.

59 L. Michael White, *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture*, vol. 2 (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1996), 124–131; and Krautheimer, *ECBA*, 6–7.

60 For contemporary discussions regarding the Roman catacombs and the *tituli* churches, see Krautheimer, *ECBA*, 8–15; George La Piana, "The Roman Church at the End of the Second Century," *Harvard Theological Review* 18 (1925): 201–277; Peter Lampe, *Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten: Untersuchungen zur Sozialgeschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987), 11–13, 307–308; White, *Social Origns*, vol. 1, 114–117; vol, 2, 209–240; and James Jeffers, *Conflict at Rome: Social Order and Hierarchy in Early Christianity*

The work of Paul Corby Finney also sheds light on this cultural development, for he identifies roughly the year AD 200 as "the likely *terminus a quo* for the creation of distinctively Christian art."[61] Before that period, there was no uniquely Christian art; Christians would adapt the style and models of their pagan neighbors. By the late-second century, however, a new stage erupted in the development of a material Christian culture. Using the example of the catacomb of St. Callistus (dated roughly AD 190–200) in which pagan artwork was given new meaning in light of the context of Christian space (the catacomb), Finney concludes that the Callistus project "represents the transition from models of accommodation and adaptation that were materially invisible to a new level of Christian identity that was *palpable* and *visible*."[62] Thus, the rise of a distinctly Christian art resulted in the "emergence of a separate, materially defined religious culture."[63] In other words, a new visible Christian "material culture" and "sacred space" was emerging at the end of the second century and the beginning of the third century, the very same period in which a Christian priesthood arose. This new materially-defined culture produced a novel stage in the church's ecclesiological self-identity: its culture was now visible and tangible, in distinction from both the Jewish and the Roman world

How, then, does the existence of such a cultural reality bear upon the emergence of a Christian priesthood? With regard to the architectural and artistic developments, a sacred space and the emergence of a more materially-defined identity would invite a new understanding of the church as "culture." It would facilitate a re-conceptualization of the role and function of the one who presided over the emerging sacred space and objects, as a "priest." Chronologically, the development of this sacred space and material culture, and the rise of the designation of "priest" for the bishop, occur at nearly the same time (late-second/early-third centuries), suggesting a provocative correlation in development. In fact, as I will show, Christian writers of this very

(Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 48–89; Émile Mâle, *Rome et ses vieilles églises* (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1992), 31–56; Matilda Webb, *The Churches and Catacombs of Early Christian Rome: A Comprehensive Guide* (Portland, Or: Sussex Academic Press, 2001), 87–92, 221–260; and Vincenzo Fiocchi Nicolai et al, *The Christian Catacombs of Rome: History, Decoration, Inscriptions*, trans. Cristina Carlo Stella and Lori-Ann Touchette, 2nd ed. (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2009).

61 Finney, *Invisible God*, 146.

62 Finney, *Invisible God*, 151. Italics added for emphasis.

63 Finney, *Invisible God*, 289.

period demonstrate not only an awareness of this emerging material culture and sacred space, but also a relationship between it and the designation of the Christian bishop as a priest.

Taken together, then, the developing religio-political ecclesiology (the crystalizing notion of the church in continuity with Israel) combined with the emergence of a distinctly Christian material culture to create a fresh context in which a new understanding of Christian leadership could develop. The Christian bishop could now be seen as the ruler of the Christian *polis* (including its own sacred space and objects) who presided over the sacred space of the church—a typological counterpart to the Israelite priest who presided over the sacred worship space in Israel. Both the religio-political ecclesiology and the emerging sacred space of the late-second, early-third century worked together to enable Christian communities across the empire to begin understanding their own ministerial leadership in typological connection with the ancient Levitical priesthood.

The Present Study

This study, then, will attempt to shed further light on the historical understanding of the rise of a Christian ministerial priesthood in the early church. My aim is to demonstrate that as the church's awareness of a newly emerging material culture (such as sacred space and sacred objects) combined with a developing religio-political ecclesiology (understanding the church as a distinct alternate public society in continuity with Israel), it created an ideal context in which the Israelite Levitical priesthood was appropriated as a working typology for the Christian ministerial leadership. In examining texts where writers speak of this Christian priesthood, I will explore a variety of questions. What are the roles and functions ascribed to bishop-priests (i.e. what do these "priests" do)? What clues are given regarding the model of priesthood from which this designation is derived? Do these writers articulate or imply a religio-political ecclesiology in connection with their designations of the Christian leader as a priest? Further, what connection do these writers suggest between the ministerial priesthood and their awareness of a Christian material culture?

Finally, in what ways do these writers portray the Christian ministerial priesthood as a typological appropriation of the Old Testament priesthood? As a basic definition of typology, R.P.C. Hanson's comments are useful: typology

is "a method of reading Christian significance into both events and persons in the Old Testament by seeing them as foreshadowings or types of Christ or events connected with his work and career."[64] In addition, Hanson emphasizes both the "similar situation" between the events and the "fulfillment" aspect of typology. He explains: "Christian typology… was a *fulfilled* typology, that is to say, it saw each of the Old Testament types as ultimately no more than prophecies or pointers to the reality which had taken place in the Christian dispensation."[65] The realities of the Old Testament become "figures" or "types" of realities found in the New Testament, Christ, or his church. The important point to observe here is that a typological interpretation works primarily as an analogy which entails both significant continuity yet also noticeable difference in development or transformation between the points of comparison. In other words, in regards to the question of priesthood, early Christian writers were appropriating the Levitical priesthood "typologically" as an institution that foreshadowed or signified the future Christian ministry subsequent to, but connected with, Christ. As such, Christian writers saw both continuity between Israelite and Christian priesthood, yet also recognized important development or transformation from one dispensation to the other.[66] To demonstrate this mode of interpretation, I will explore the language of typology (*figura, forma, typos*) employed by these writers when speaking about the Old Testament or Christian priesthood.

In addition to the constructive thesis, I hope also to demonstrate a negative conclusion as a by-product of this project. Namely, in demonstrating the church's designation of a ministerial priesthood in connection with a

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64 R.P.C. Hanson, "Biblical Exegesis in the Early Church," in *Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. 1, eds. P.R. Ackroyd and C.F. Evans (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1970), 413. Charles Kannengiesser offers an equally helpful clarification of what a "type" is: "a person, an event or an institution with a lasting significance which enables that person, event or institution to signify someone or something else in God's future acting in history" (*Handbook of Patristic Exegesis*, vol. 1 [Boston: Brill, 2004], 230).

65 R.P.C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959), 67 italics original; see pp. 7 & 22 for his formal definition which emphasizes the aspect of "similar situation" between type and antitype.

66 For example, early Christian writers are very clear that their priests neither offer bloody animal sacrifices, nor that they come from a special lineage such as Aaron. While stressing other continuities between old and new priests, these examples demonstrate that there were also noticeable differences between the "types."

religio-political ecclesiology and an emerging Christian material culture, the idea either that the Christian priesthood was modeled on the pagan priesthood, or that the Christian priesthood arose solely in connection with the Eucharistic sacrifice, falls short. I will at times take pause to highlight the shortcomings of such ideas in light of the evidence presented.

In general, my argument will proceed along chronological lines, examining the developing Christian ministerial priesthood from its clear inception in the early-third century up through the beginning of the fourth century.[67] Since no one thinker and no one treatise can cover both the chronological spread and the geographical acceptance of such developments, I will be tracing the issue through a diversity of thinkers, over a number of decades, across a variety of geographic locations.

I will begin, in chapter 2, with an examination of Tertullian of Carthage, the first consistent witness to the Christian designation of the bishop as a *sacerdos*. Though his references are infrequent, a generally clear picture can be ascertained concerning Tertullian's understanding of the Christian priest in connection with his religio-political ecclesiology and especially his awareness of an emerging material culture. One treatise in particular (*De Pudicitia*) demonstrates this relationship in Tertullian's understanding. There he portrays not only the Levitical priest as a *figura* for the Christian *sacerdos*, but he also depicts the Christian worship space in concrete, physical ways as the sacred space which the bishop, like the Levitical priests, must guard and protect.

Chapters 3 and 4 will examine two different church orders. Chapter 3 addresses an early western order (*The Apostolic Tradition*) and demonstrates the link between priesthood and religio-political ecclesiology, albeit in subtle ways. There are striking similarities between the description of the Christian bishop and the Old Testament Levitical priesthood, as ones who "stand and minister before the Lord," indicating the author's intentional evocation of the Levitical priesthood as a model or "type" for Christian leadership. Moreover, the *Apostolic Tradition* provides one of the earliest indications of an emerging Christian material culture in its references to *topos*, *locus* and Christian

67 The development of the priesthood, of course, continues in the East and West through to the modern day. I choose to end my study in the early fourth century with Eusebius of Caesarea because with him the notion of a Christian ministerial priesthood in connection with the church's religio-political ecclesiology and awareness of a Christian material culture finds it climax and stabilization.

cemeteries. I will demonstrate further that this emerging Christian space plays an important part in the functions and responsibilities of the bishop-priest.

An examination of the eastern church order known as the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, in chapter 4, will demonstrate a continuation of this development. There, the bishop is described in distinctly Levitical ways, such as the "steward of God" and his "house," and the one who "serves in the holy tabernacle, the holy catholic church." Moreover, the author also betrays an awareness of an emerging material culture to which the bishop-priest must attend. Just as the Israelite priest was an "attendant to God's house" (the physical Tabernacle or Temple), so too the bishop is portrayed typologically as the "steward of God's house" (the physical church building and Christian *sacra*).

Chapter 5 will demonstrate that Origen of Alexandria also displays similar connections between a Christian ministerial priesthood and a religio-political ecclesiology. He depicts the church both as an alternate *polis* in the Greco-Roman world, and as a people in continuity with, yet transformation of Israel. Taken together, this religio-political ecclesiology enables him to appropriate the Levitical priestly ministry of the Old Testament in a typological way for Christian leadership. Like the nation of Israel, the church too, says Origen, exists as its own *polis*, complete with Christian sacred things (*sacra*) and a ministerial priesthood which performs the necessary liturgical functions for the community.

Moving back to the west, I will examine Cyprian of Carthage in chapter 6. Like the preceding chapters, I will demonstrate that Cyprian also understands the Levitical priesthood as a typology for Christian ministers, particularly in their role as liturgical leaders and ecclesial authorities. Likewise, Cyprian displays a conscious awareness of a Christian material culture (pulpits, altars, buildings) over which the bishop presides. Using the Old Testament priesthood as the "rule and pattern (*forma*) now held in the clergy (*in clero*)," Cyprian describes the bishop as the "attendants of God" who "wait on the altar."

Chapter 7 takes us to the early fourth century: the post-Constantinian Eusebius of Caesarea. Examining his panegyric on the dedication of the church building in Tyre, I will demonstrate that Eusebius, likewise, couches his priestly designations of Christian bishops in a religio-political ecclesiology. The building of the Tyrian church becomes a reflection of Old Testament accounts of the building of the Tabernacle and the first and second Temples. Christian churches are represented as Christian sacred spaces over which the bishop, like the Old Testament priest, must preside.

Finally, in chapter 8, I will conclude by comparing the third- and fourth-century developments with the earlier evidence of the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers, showing that the Christian ministerial priesthood in the third century is more than an institutional creation ex nihilo, but rather the continuation and advancement of the church's earlier ecclesiological and cultural trajectories. The New Testament and Apostolic Fathers, though never calling the Christian ministers "priests," all demonstrate a certain arc in that direction through its nascent religio-political ecclesiology and analogical appropriation of the Old Testament priesthood. This evidence indicates that the developments seen in the third and fourth centuries are in fact not new, but rather advance and develop previous self-understanding and practice in the earlier church.

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GUARDIANS OF SACRED SPACE

Tertullian of Carthage

The first witness to a consistent application of the title *sacerdos* to Christian leadership comes from Tertullian of Carthage around AD 200. The occurrences are not frequent, and discerning Tertullian's full understanding of a ministerial priesthood is difficult with such a dearth of references. Nevertheless, Tertullian's appropriation of *sacerdos* as a title for the Christian bishop remains significant. He is the earliest Christian writer repeatedly to apply a priestly designation to Christian ministers and thus affords us the opportunity to test the prevailing consensus that Christian priesthood derived either from imitation of pagan priesthood or in conjunction with the minister's role over the Eucharistic sacrifice. As we will see, a careful examination of Tertullian's writings demonstrates that his articulation of the Christian leader as a *sacerdos* stems not from an imitation of pagan priesthood, nor solely from a connection with Eucharistic sacrifice. Rather, it is Tertullian's religio-political ecclesiology—his understanding of the Christian assembly as a community in continuity with ancient Israel—combined with a newly emerging spatial awareness of Christian assembly rooms as "sacred space," that creates an ideal context in which the Old Testament Israelite priesthood is appropriated as a *figura* for Christian leadership.

A Christian Ministerial Priesthood

Tertullian's designations of the Christian leader as a *sacerdos* are not overly abundant; yet, they are frequent enough to establish a consistent understanding on his part. The first comes in his work *De Baptismo* where Tertullian explains who can give and receive baptism, remarking: "Indeed the supreme right of giving (baptism) belongs to the bishop who is the high priest (*summus sacerdos*), if anyone is (*si qui est*)."[1] No further explanation is given. The connection between the right of baptism and the priesthood of the bishop, however, is unmistakable.

In his Montanist work, *De Exhortatione Castitatis*, Tertullian speaks vehemently against Christians marrying twice, even if one's first wife has died.[2] In chapter 11, he argues that one wife is spiritually distracting enough, two even more so. "For," he says, "the shame is double, since after a second marriage, two wives stand beside the husband, one in the spirit, the other in the flesh."[3] Such a man, argues Tertullian, will continue to remember the first wife in his prayers and will offer oblations on her behalf.[4] He continues his argument:

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1 *De Bapt*. 17.2, *CCSL* 1:291. The Latin of this passage is admittedly difficult; scholars have offered different translations for the phrase *summus sacerdos, si qui est, episcopus*, but the general sense is understood: the bishop is the one with the right of baptizing, and if anyone is called a *summus sacerdos*, it is him. See Maurice Bévenot, "Tertullian's Thought about the Christian Priesthood," *Corona Gratiarum*, vol. 1 (Brugge: Sint Pietersabdij, 1970), 129; and Colin Bulley, *The Priesthood of Some Believers: Developments from the General to the Special Priesthood in the Christian Literature of the First Three Centuries* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2000), 69–70.

2 It is important to note that Tertullian's Montantist conception of the bishop as a priest does not differ from his pre-Montanist days. As David Rankin has demonstrated, Tertullian freely designates the Christian bishop a priest in texts written from both time periods. Therefore, for my purposes, a careful distinction between pre and post-Montanist works is unnecessary. See David Rankin, "Tertullian's Consistency of Thought on Ministry," *Studia Patristica* 21 (1989): 271–276; Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1995); and Bulley, *Priesthood*, 75. Compare the opposing view, espoused by Adhemar D'Alès, *La théologie de Tertullien* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1905) and Gustave Bardy, "Le sacerdoce chrétien d'apres Tertullien," *La vie spirituelle* 58 (1939): 109–134. The point D'Alès and Bardy wish to make is that Tertullian seemed to emphasize the priesthood of all Christians more in his Montanist days. Nevertheless, as Rankin has demonstrated, Tertullian still uses the term *sacerdos* in both periods to designate the bishop.

3 *Exh. Cast*. 11.1, *CCSL* 2:1031.

4 Presumably prayers offered in the worship service, most likely in association with the Eucharistic offering.

"Will you therefore stand before the Lord with as many wives as you remember in prayer? Will you make an offering for two wives and recommend them both through the priest (*per sacerdotem*) who was ordained by virtue of his monogamy?"[5] Here the designation of the Christian minister as a *sacerdos* is used without explanation, yet in relation to the bishop's role in handling a Christian husband's offering.

Likewise, there are other instances where Tertullian speaks of "priestly functions" (*sacerdotalia munera*) and a "priestly order" (*sacerdotalis ordo*). In his *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, Tertullian confronts his opponents' argument that the church was in error until the Marcionites and Valentinians arrived. Tertullian retorts with an ironic tone that this would then mean that

> the gospel was preached wrongly, it was believed wrongly, so many thousands were baptized wrongly, so many works of faith were performed wrongly, so many virtues and gifts were acted out wrongly, so many priesthoods (*sacerdotia*) and offices (*ministeria*) were performed wrongly, so many martyrs were crowned wrongly![6]

His point, of course, is to show the absurdity of his opponents' arguments that everything done before their arrival was somehow done "wrongly." In the context of this sarcastic jab, however, one sees that Tertullian likens the offices (*ministeria*) of the church to the priesthoods (*sacerdotia*). The context does not clearly indicate what that *sacerdotia* entailed, only that certain offices (*ministeria*) were included, most likely liturgical roles such as preaching, baptism and Eucharist.

A few chapters later in the same work, Tertullian continues his attack on his opponents, this time for their obvious lack of order in the community, noting that "today one man is a bishop, tomorrow another; today one is a deacon who tomorrow is a reader; today one is a presbyter who tomorrow is a layman. For they even impose on laymen the priestly functions (*sacerdotalia munera*)."[7] Here the context helps identify the "priestly functions" as including the offices of ministerial leadership, clearly the bishop, likely the presbyter, and (perhaps even) the reader.[8] In other words, the functions necessary for the

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5 *Exh. Cast.* 11.2, *CCSL* 2:1031.

6 *De Praes.* 29.3, *CCSL* 1:209–210.

7 *De Praes.* 41.8, *CCSL* 1:222.

8 It is not certain that Tertullian includes "reading" as part of these priestly functions; however, the context seems to imply that all the liturgical actions and responsibilities are entailed in the *sacerdotalia munera*.

liturgical operation of the community are deemed by Tertullian as *sacerdotalia munera* (priestly functions).

The liturgical operations of the church cast as "priestly functions" are found again in his treatise *De Virginibus Verlandis*. There, Tertullian argues that the ecclesiastical rules applying to women should equally apply to virgins. He begins with a reference to Paul's words in 1 Cor. 14:34–35 that women are not permitted to speak in church. He then augments and clarifies that rule: "neither is a woman permitted to teach, nor to baptize, nor to offer sacrifice, nor to claim for herself any male function (*ullius virilis muneris*), still less the lot of the priestly office (*sacerdotalis officii*)."[9] In other words, the priestly office, according to Tertullian, entails the functions (*munera*) of teaching, baptizing and offering sacrifice. Again, these various liturgical functions are all described by Tertullian as "priestly" (*sacerdotalis*).

From these passages, then, one can see that Tertullian freely employs priestly concepts and terminology for Christian leadership. While not always clear about what that priesthood entails, the composite picture indicates that Tertullian attaches his priestly notions not merely to the function of offering Eucharistic sacrifice,[10] but to a much wider array of liturgical tasks and responsibilities in the community: baptism, sacrifice, preaching, and possibly even Scripture reading. In other words, according to Tertullian, the ministerial leadership of the church is a priesthood by virtue of its responsibilities over the worshipping Christian community.

Religio-Political Ecclesiology and a Typology of Levitical Priesthood

From where then does this notion of a Christian ministerial priesthood derive? Does Tertullian give any intimations about the influences behind his description of Christian leaders as priests? In fact, he does. Returning to his *De Exhortatione Castitatis*, we find that Tertullian explicitly draws upon the Levitical priesthood in designating Christian ministry as a "priestly order" (*ordo sacerdotalis*). Fomenting against Christians who want to marry twice,

9 *De Virg.* 9.1, *CCSL* 2:1218–1219.

10 Contra Albano Vilela who argues that *sacerdos* is always connected with sacrifice in Tertullian (*La condition collegiale des prêtres au IIIe siècle* [Paris : Beauchesne, 1971], 241–242).

Tertullian urges an examination of what he calls the "model of antiquity" (*forma vestutatis*), as a pattern of discipline and order. "For behold," he says,

> in the old law I observe the license of repeated marriage being restricted. A caution is given in Leviticus: 'My priests shall not marry several times.'… Therefore, the apostle more fully and more closely orders that the one who is chosen into the priestly order (*ordinem sacerdotalem*) must be a man of one marriage (cf. 1 Tim.3:2; Tit.1:6).[11]

In this passage, Tertullian clearly has the Christian bishop in mind, referencing the prescription in the pastoral epistles that a bishop must be a man of one wife. Furthermore, he identifies the episcopal office as the "priestly order" (*ordo sacerdotalis*) directly tying it to the Levitical priesthood. Although it is uncertain what Levitical passage Tertullian has in mind, it is clear that he is working out an analogy between old covenant priestly leadership and the Christian office of bishop.

In this extended analogy between Israelite priesthood and Christian priesthood, the Levitical priests become "types" (*figurae/formae*) for the Christian ministerial office. The old priesthood and its laws act as a "model of antiquity" (*forma vestutatis*), a pattern from which Tertullian can derive his understanding of Christian leadership and its discipline. Thus, Tertullian's Christian community, as we will see, is a public worshipping assembly likened to the Israelite nation, and, one might add, at odds with the surrounding pagan culture.

This connection with Israel's priesthood becomes even stronger when we consider one final passage where Tertullian describes Christian leadership in explicitly priestly terms. In his treatise, *De Pudicitia*, Tertullian is adamant about refusing a second repentance after baptism for those who have committed egregious sins. He cites as evidence for his argument Hebrews 6:4–8 and concludes that this author "never knew of any second repentance for an adulterer or fornicator."[12] This moves him into a discussion of the Old Testament purity laws which held "types" (*figurae*) for the present day. He takes the case of leprosy as an example: Leviticus 13:13–14 specifies that if a man with leprosy should become entirely white, the priest shall declare him clean; if however, the leprosy reappears, he must again be declared unclean. Tertullian applies this to his present situation: if after baptism "that which was considered dead to sin in his flesh returns, it is now to be judged unclean

11 *Exh. Cast.* 7.1, *CCSL* 2:1024.

12 *De Pud.* 20.5, *CCSL* 2:1324.

and is not to be expiated by a priest (*sacerdote*). Thus adultery, recurring again from that pristine state and defiling the unity of the new color from which it was excluded, is a sin unable to be cleansed."[13] That is, for Tertullian, one who has been made clean by baptism cannot be cleansed again from the defiling stain of adultery.[14]

Continuing his argument, Tertullian appropriates the law of the diseased house in Leviticus 14:33–47. According to that text, if a house is found to contain reddish and green spots on the walls, the priest is to examine the house. If the disease remains after seven days, the defiled stones or wood must be removed and replaced with clean material. If, however, the disease returns, the house is declared unclean and the priest must tear the house down. Tertullian then makes application to his present situation: "This refers to the man (in flesh and soul) who after baptism and the entering of the priest (*sacerdotum*), resumes anew the disease and stains of the flesh… and is not rebuilt any further in the church after his ruin."[15]

To this point, Tertullian has been working with an extended analogy between the Levitical cleanliness laws and the impossibility of a second repentance after baptism. But more significant for our investigation, the priests of old are likened to the Christian leaders responsible for admitting or refusing Christians into the church. Just as the cleanliness laws act as *figurae* for the laws of the church, so too the old covenant priests become figures for Christian ministers, likewise called *sacerdotes*. Thus, according to Tertullian, the Christian bishop as *sacerdos* has a responsibility in the administration of penance and in determining who is admitted or refused entry into the church.

As in the previous passage from *De Exhortatione Castitatis*, Tertullian here explicitly draws upon the Old Testament Levitical priesthood as the pattern for Christian priestly order, assuming a genuine connection between the Christian assembly and the Israelite reality. Thus Tertullian's employment of the ancient Israelite priesthood as a *forma vestutatis* (model of antiquity) demonstrates his theological understanding of the church as a community in continuity with ancient Israel. This religio-political ecclesiology lies as a

13 *De Pud.* 20.7, *CCSL* 2:1324–1325.

14 In this context, "expiation by a priest" most likely refers to the action of the bishop declaring someone forgiven and thus reinstated into the community and welcomed to Eucharistic participation.

15 *De Pud.* 20.12, *CCSL* 2:1325. By the "entering of the priest," Tertullian likely refers metaphorically to the bishop's examination of the baptizand's life.

backdrop to his explicit connections between a Christian ministerial priesthood and the Levitical priesthood, which acts as a *figura*, a typology, for the Christian bishop. As Paul Mattei suggests, "It is necessary to see in the Christian domain the re-employment of the Old Testament terms *hiereus* (*sacerdos*), *hierosune* (*sacerdotium*) and especially *leitourgia* (*ministerium*) which applied to the Levitical priesthood and to the sacrificial worship of the Old Law."[16] The Christian community is a public worshipping assembly likened to the Israelite nation, and at odds with the surrounding pagan culture. As such, the church is a culture in its own right, distinct from the surrounding cultures.[17]

This becomes clear in Tertullian's treatise, *De Cultu Feminarum*, where he describes the sharp differences of practice and custom between Christians and "Gentiles." Tertullian reminds the Christian community that in addition to a difference in dress and appearance, "you neither wander through the temples, nor demand public shows, nor have any acquaintance with the feast days of the Gentiles."[18] In *Ad Nationes*, Tertullian likewise writes that Christians form an alternate society which battles "against the institutions (*institutiones*) of our ancestors, the authority of things received, the laws of our rulers"[19] which are all steeped in the worship of false gods. Finally in his treatise *De Corona*, Tertullian expresses his most explicit articulation of this notion that the church is an alternate society, distinct from the surrounding culture. There, he declares:

> But your ranks (*ordines*) and your magistrates (*magistratus*) and the very name of your court (*curiae*) is the church of Christ (*ecclesia Christi*)… You are a foreigner in this world and a citizen (*civis*) of the heavenly city Jerusalem. 'Our citizenship,' Paul says, 'is in heaven' (Phil 3:20). You have your own registers (*census*) and your own calendars (*fastos*).[20]

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16 "Il faut y voir en domaine chrétien le remploi des termes vetero-testamentaires hiereus (sacerdos), hierosune (sacerdotium) et surtout leitourgia (ministerium) qui s'appliquaient au sacerdoce lévitique et au culte sacrificiel de l'Ancienne Loi." Paul Mattei, "'Habere Ius Sacerdotis': Sacerdoce et laicat au témoignage de Tertullien," *Revue des sciences religieuses* 59 no. 3–4 (1985): 200.

17 This makes sense, of course, in Tertullian's Montanist days when he moves to an even more extreme separatist position; however, he clearly views the church as a unique "culture" in his pre-Montanist writings as well, demonstrating that Tertullian's politico-theological ecclesiology is consistent in both eras.

18 *Cult. Fem.* II.11.1, *CCSL* 1:366.

19 *Ad Nat.* II.1.7, *CCSL* 1:41.

20 *De Cor.* 13.1, 4, *CCSL* 2:1060–1061.

In this brief passage, Tertullian accumulates a series of Roman political vocabulary: *ordo, magistratus, curia, civis, census, fastus*. Yet, he redefines their meaning in a Christian context so that the political vocabulary expressing *Roman* identity and culture is appropriated and transformed as political vocabulary expressing *Christian* identity and culture. Christians, too, have ranks and leaders; however, according to Tertullian their "citizenship" belongs to the heavenly city, Jerusalem, the church of Christ, and not to the Roman world. The Christian church, then, is portrayed as a *polis* in its own right, a public society distinct from the surrounding culture of the Roman world. The Christian church, according to Tertullian, is its own culture, complete with rules, rites, registers, calendars, customs, behavior, and, of course, leadership.

Tertullian describes this leadership of the new Christian *polis* in a variety of ways, some of which evoke the Roman political system (such as *magistratus* [*De Cor.* 13.1] and *ordo* [*De Monog.* 8.4; 11.4]). The work of Pierre van Beneden has demonstrated that Tertullian was the first to apply this latter term such that the church *ordo* evoked similar language used in public institutions.[21] Furthermore, the Christian rulers, like the Roman rulers, have a certain authority (*ius/potestas*) over the people. Tertullian ascribes to them the *ius docendi*,[22] the *ius dandi baptismi*,[23] the *potestas delicta donandi*,[24] and the *ius sacerdotis*.[25]

Given this explicit parallel with the vocabulary of Roman structures and authority, one might expect Tertullian's sacerdotal designations to draw upon the pagan priesthood as well. A close examination, however, reveals that this is decidedly not the case. Tertullian never designates Christian leaders as *sacerdos* when speaking to a pagan audience. This is particularly striking in *Apologeticum* 39 where Tertullian offers to a Roman audience a full description of Christian social life and practice. There, he designates the church as a *curia*, a *corpus* with its own treasury, rites, customs, morals, discipline, and leadership. He clearly attempts to establish common ground between the Christian

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21 Pierre van Beneden, *Aux origines d'une terminologie sacramentelle: Ordo, ordinare, ordinatio dans la littérature chrétienne avant 313* (Louvain: Spicilegium sacrum Lovaniense, 1974), 49. Contra Vilela who argues that *sacerdos* is always connected with sacrifice in Tertullian (*La condition collegiale*, 228, for similar observations.

22 *De Bapt.* 1.3, *CCSL* 1:277.

23 *De Bapt.* 17.1, *CCSL* 1:291.

24 *De Pud.* 21.7, *CCSL* 2:1326.

25 *Exh. Cast.* 7.4, *CCSL* 2:1025.

community and the Roman world, to demonstrate the very political reality of the church in the Roman empire; yet in this context, he calls the Christian leaders *seniores* (elders), never *sacerdotes*. Had he understood the Christian ministerial priesthood as a counterpart or superior equivalent to the pagan priesthood, this would be the most natural place to make that point. Instead, Tertullian avoids the designation altogether. For him, the Christian priesthood (when explained) is always connected with ancient Israel. Moreover, the one instance in which Tertullian applies the more pagan title *pontifex maximus* to a Christian bishop (*De Pudicitia* 1.1), his intention is to mock an opposing bishop who has acquired for himself too much power,[26] not to object to priestly titles for Christian ministers.[27]

Elsewhere, when he does speak of the pagan priesthood, he offers a very negative critique. The priesthood and sacrifices of the public games, for example, are described as participation in "the assembly of demons" (*daemoniarum conventus*).[28] Likewise, in his *De Praescriptione Haereticorum*, he eschews the priesthood and practices of the pagan world as a mere imitation of the Mosaic law. He urges them to consider "the priestly offices (*sacerdotalia officia*) and emblems and privileges, the sacrificial ministry, instruments, vessels, and the curiosities of their sacrifices, rites, and prayers. Did not the devil clearly imitate that moroseness of the Jewish law?"[29] The pagan priesthood is at best a demonic knock-off of the divinely established Israelite priesthood.

In other words, Tertullian intentionally avoids the appearance of a correspondence between the pagan priesthood and the Christian priesthood. Instead, as seen already in *De Pud*. 20–21 & *Exh*. *Cast*. 7, he explicitly draws from the Old Testament Levitical priesthood as the pattern for Christian priestly order, discipline and leadership. The church is portrayed as a unique culture, like the Roman world, with its own ranks, magistrates,

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26 Hans von Campenhausen suggests also that the term *pontifex maximus* still would have retained pagan overtones for Tertullian's audience; this may be why Tertullian chooses to employ such a designation against his opponent (*Kirchliches Amt und geistliche Vollmacht in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1963], 252 n.3).

27 Thus, I take issue with Bévenot's conclusion that because "his treating the bishop as 'sacerdos' [in this case] was not meant to be complimentary" therefore Tertullian was not necessarily comfortable with such designations at all ("Tertullian's Thoughts," 137). From the entire discussion above on *De Pud*. 20, it is clear that Tertullian quite freely employs the sacerdotal analogy to Christian leadership without apology.

28 *De Spect*. 7.3, *CCSL* 1:233.

29 *De Praes*. 40.6, *CCSL* 1:220.

citizens, registers and calendars, and leadership. Yet, the church's priestly leadership is consistently grounded in the Old Testament priesthood. The designation of the Christian leader as a *sacerdos* thus derives straight from this underlying religio-political ecclesiology. The church is a public and political entity in the Roman world which shares a religious and priestly common-ground, not with the Roman culture, but with the nation of Israel and its institutions.

Yet, Tertullian's connection between Christian leadership and the Levitical priest is more than a theological or conceptual abstraction, for not only does Tertullian connect Christian leadership with the ancient Israelite priesthood, he also demonstrates, as we will see, an awareness of an emerging Christian *material* culture that directly relates to his understanding of the Christian leader as a priest.

Emerging Christian Material Culture and Sacred Space

As discussed in the Introduction, a distinctly Christian material culture did not arise in the Roman Empire until roughly AD 200. Before that period, Christians were relatively invisible to the pagan eye; they had no distinctly Christian art or architecture and their visible, public profile was quite low. By the late-second or early-third century, however, as Paul Finney has demonstrated, a new Christian visibility developed with the "emergence of a separate, materially defined religious culture."[30] What was once a largely invisible community within the *polis* or empire was now beginning to gain land, property and money, and as a result, a new found public visibility.

This depiction of the church as a *polis* with an emerging Christian material culture is exactly what we find in the archaeological evidence available in Carthage. The main piece of evidence is the archaeological site Damous el-Karita, first excavated by Fr. A. L. Delattre in 1878.[31] W. C. H. Frend calls it "by far the most elaborate Christian complex yet found in the Carthage

30 Paul Corby Finney, *The Invisible God: The Earliest Christians on Art* (New York: Oxford U.P., 1994), 289.

31 See esp. *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, s.v. "Carthage"; also A.L. Delattre, *La basilique de Damous el-Karita à Carthage*, Constantine: impr. de Adolphe Braham, 1892).

area."[32] It included a basilica, a baptistery, and other smaller buildings near the church. There was also a large cemetery on the grounds. While the fuller basilica church structure cannot be dated precisely (but most likely in the late third century), the beginnings of the complex, certainly the cemetery and perhaps some earlier architectural structures, date to the end of the second or early-third century.[33]

From the texts examined above, one can begin to see Tertullian's own awareness of the reality of such a Christian material culture. The church is cast in religio-political terms as an alternate society distinct from the Roman world in public and noticeable ways. This is more than rhetorical projection on the part of Tertullian, for he also provides the first textual witness to the emergence of Christian public space and place in the world, as well as a distinctly Christian material culture. He notes, for example, that Christians now have tombs and sepulchers in which the dead are buried. In one instance, he complains against the pagans: "with the very rage of the Bacchanals, they do not even spare the Christian dead, but tear them from their repose in the grave (*sepulturae*)."[34] Elsewhere, Tertullian speaks of a time "when the pagans cried out about the place of our graves (*de areis sepulturarum*): 'No places (*areae*) for the Christians!'"[35]

The emergence of Christian art also appears in Tertullian when he speaks of the Eucharistic cup specially decorated with the image of the Shepherd. In his treatise *De Pudicitia*, he twice indicates his awareness of contemporary Christians who display "paintings upon your chalices" (*picturae calicum vestrorum*)[36] and "the shepherd whom you portray on your chalice (*in calice depingis*)."[37]

Likewise a number of references to the Christian *ecclesia* connote in their context an architectural reference. In *De Idololatria*, for example, Tertullian warns against Christian participation in idolatry of any form, lest he bewail "that a Christian should come from idols into the church (*ab idolis in ecclesiam*),

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32 W.H.C. Frend, "Jews and Christians in Third Century Carthage," in *Paganisme, Judaïsme, Christianisme*, ed. Marcel Simon (Paris: Éditions E De Boccard, 1978), 190.

33 Frend, "Jews and Christians," 190; and J. Ferrons, "Inscriptions juives de Carthage," *Cahiers de Byrsa* I (1951): 184–187—date it to the late second or early-third century.

34 *Apolog.* 37.2, *CCSL* 1:148.

35 *Ad Scap.* 3.2, *CCSL* 2:1129.

36 *De Pud.* 7.1, *CCSL* 2:1292.

37 *De Pud.* 10.12, *CCSL* 2:1301.

should come from a hostile workshop (*officina*) into the house of God (*domum dei*)."[38] As Harry Janssen has concluded, the best interpretation of the expression *ab idolis in ecclesiam* "ought to be understood literally, that is, spatially."[39] Tertullian depicts an explicit contrast between the Christian going from one architectural structure to another, from the *officina* to the *domus dei*. He clearly has in mind a physical space set aside for Christian worship.

In his treatise *De Fuga in Persecutione* he again depicts the Christian *ecclesia* in terms that indicate an awareness of the physical nature of the building. There, he describes Christians "who with trembling, assemble together in the church (*convenient in ecclesiam*)… [and] rally in large numbers into the church (*in ecclesiam*)."[40] From the context it is clear that Tertullian's use of *ecclesia* is much more than a mere "assembly," but an actual physical space. He speaks of the *place* of assembly: the Christians gather in the church (*in ecclesiam*). Part of Tertullian's argument here is that unlike the heretics, true Christians should have no reason to hide their place of gathering. The Christian places of worship are well-known to their pagan adversaries. The church is a public institution, known to the outside world, and growing in its visible manifestation in the empire.

The heretics' lack of precisely this public dimension becomes, then, part of Tertullian's critique upon them. After reviewing the dissent and schisms found within the heretical movements, Tertullian further castigates them: "The majority of them do not even have churches (*ecclesias*). They are Motherless, houseless (*sine sede*), deprived of faith, exiled, and wandering about."[41] In addition to having perverted the faith, Tertullian levels against them the accusation that they lack church buildings as well. While it is clear that *ecclesia* here refers to actual buildings, Franz Dölger also suggests that "by *sedes* Tertullian probably thinks of the spatial gathering place of the church community."[42] In other words, according to Tertullian, true Christians meet in designated spaces for worship; certain buildings can properly be identified

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38 *De Idol.* 7.1, *CCSL* 2:1106.

39 "… wird wortlich, also local aufzufassen." Harry Janssen, *Kultur und Sprache: Zur Geschichte der alten Kirche im Spiegel der Sprachentwicklung von Tertullian bis Cyprian* (Nijmegen, Dekker & Van de Vegt, 1938), 32.

40 *De Fug.* 3.2, *CCSL* 2 :1139.

41 *De Praes.* 42.10, *CCSL* 1 :222.

42 "Bei *sedes* [denkt Tertullian] wohl an den raumlichen Sammelpunkt der Kirchengemeinde." Franz Dölger, "Unserer Taube Haus: Die Lage des christlichen Kultbaues nach Tertullian," in *Antike und Christentum: Kultur- und religionsgeschichtliche Studien*, eds. Franz Dölger and Theodor Klauser, vol. 2 (Münster: Aschendorf, 1930): 48–49.

as "churches." Those groups who lack such public, institutional reality are suspect in the eyes of Tertullian.

As Victor Saxer suggests, "it thus seems reasonable to allow that buildings did in fact exist for a cultic use in the time of Tertullian."[43] Tertullian's use of *ecclesia* in certain contexts lends itself to such an interpretation. This is not to say that Christians were constructing new buildings for worship. Nevertheless, there was an emerging sense of distinct, sacred Christian space and Christian objects set aside for specific use. A distinctly Christian material culture was emerging at this time and Tertullian demonstrates an awareness of such a development. The cups used in their worship services were not just ordinary cups; they were chalices specially designated for their task by the religious images depicted on them. Certain buildings were not just ordinary homes, but could be seen as an *ecclesia* or *domus dei*. As Timothy Barnes concludes, "by the time of Tertullian the city already contained at least one building (perhaps part of a private house) which could be described as a church."[44]

All of the evidence above testifies to this subtle but significant development in the early-third century. Tertullian's religio-political description of the church, as an alternate society in the world, becomes more visibly explicit. Christians not only share common beliefs and customs, they have their own sacred space and objects. Yet one might ask: with such an emergence of a distinctly Christian material culture, what influence would such a development have on these worshiping Christian communities and their understanding of ecclesial leadership?

Jeanne Kilde, for one, has explored the ways sacred space can influence community life. She notes, for example, that sacred ritual space can "contribute to the formation and maintenance of internal relationships within the congregations. They designate hierarchy and they demarcate community… Indeed, [such spaces] are dynamic agents in the construction, development, and persistence"[45] of Christian communal life and worship. Using the

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43 "Il me paraît donc raisonnable d'admettre qu'existaient effectivement, au temps de Tertullien, des édifices à usage cultuel" Victor Saxer, *Vie liturgique et quotidienne à Carthage vers le milieu du IIIe siècle: le témoinage de saint Cyprien et de ses contemporains d'Afrique* (Città del Vaticano: Pontificio Istituto di archeologia cristiana, 1984), 55.

44 Timothy Barnes, *Tertullian: A Historical and Literary Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 89.

45 Jeanne Kilde, *Sacred Power, Sacred Space: An Introduction to Christian Architecture and Worship* (New York: Oxford U.P., 2008), 3.

example of the Israelite Jewish Temple, particularly its increasing sacredness as you approach the holy of holies, as well as the limitations within the community as to who can approach those holy areas, Kilde remarks that "the demarking of social power among the clergy, patrons, and ordinary people is frequently part of the sacralization process."[46]

So if the sacralization of space influences community life, perspectives, membership and hierarchy, we might ask: what influence does sacred space have on a community's understanding of ecclesial leadership in early Christianity? Tertullian holds importance for us on this question precisely because he offers evidence of an emerging awareness of Christian material culture and sacred space,[47] but does so in striking conjunction with designating the Christian minister as a *sacerdos*.

As we have already seen, in his treatise *De Pudicitia*, Tertullian describes Christian ministers in priestly terms, linked specifically to the ancient Levitical priesthood in the Jewish Scriptures. Yet in this same treatise Tertullian describes Christian ecclesial leadership within the context of an emerging awareness of sacred worship space, and repeatedly refers to the architectural reality of the church building in connection with the bishop-priest's requirements of administering penance. Tertullian launches into his subject with an attack on an unnamed bishop who, in his arrogance, decreed that adulterers and fornicators may be granted forgiveness. Tertullian responds with a lengthy treatise attacking such "liberality" (*liberalitas*). Rather than permit entrance into the church, Tertullian declares that "we fix for adulterers and for fornicators the same boundary of the threshold (*limitem liminis*);"[48] that is, they are not permitted to enter the church. Tertullian again: "For he stands before the doors (*pro foribus*) of the church, and admonishes others by the example of his own stigma, and calls for the tears of his brothers."[49] The sinner is excluded, not just from the community, but from the physical space of the worshipping assembly, and must stand outside the doors (*fores*) of the church building.

Later, Tertullian reiterates this principle: "But we banish the remaining frenzies of passions (impious both in the body and in sex, and beyond the

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46 Kilde, *Sacred Power*, 9.

47 I am indebted to Franz Dölger, Harry Janssen for this point, as well as Adhemar D'Alès (*L'édit de Calliste: étude sur les origines de la pénitence chrétienne*, 2nd ed. [Paris: Beauchesne, 1914], 409–421) for their work in indicating these texts.

48 *De Pud.* 1.21, *CCSL* 2:1283.

49 *De Pud.* 3.5, *CCSL* 2:1286.

laws of nature) not only from the threshold (*limine*), but from every shelter of the church (*omni ecclesiae tecto*), because they are not sins, but monstrosities (*monstra*)."[50] Once again, the egregious sinner is not permitted into the worship space, excluded not only from the "shelter of the church" (*tectum ecclesiae*) but from even crossing its threshold (*limen*). The sinner must not taint the sacred space of the church with his *monstra*. The spatial reference is seen yet again when Tertullian asks, "And indeed why do you lead into the church (*in ecclesiam inducens*) and prostrate in the midst (*in medium*) the repentant adulterer, clothed in a garment of hair and ashes, composed with disgrace and dread, in order to entreat the brotherhood?"[51]

From these texts, one gains a growing sense that Tertullian is describing a concrete worship space, a church building with doors (*fores*), a threshold (*limen*), and ceiling (*tectum*). Moreover, this worship space is sacred, set apart for holy use. No egregious sinner (even penitent) may enter it to defile it. Particularly important to notice here is the way sacred space is defined precisely in terms of boundaries and thresholds. As Harold Turner explains, the threshold of sacred space "marks the transition from the everyday natural order to the place of divine power and presence that lies beyond, within the precinct."[52] Mircea Eliade likewise suggests that "the threshold is the boundary, the frontier that distinguishes and opposes two worlds [the sacred and the profane]."[53] So protection of the threshold becomes important for religious communities which enjoy sacred space, and sacred space is delineated precisely in terms of boundaries and thresholds. This holds true for Tertullian's understanding of his own community's sacred space, defined and identified in terms of doors, thresholds, and roofs. The running thesis of Tertullian's treatise is perfectly clear: the bishop of the Christian community must not allow the sacred space of the church building (delineated by clear, physical boundary markers) to be tainted by the presence of egregious sinners. The responsibility, says Tertullian, lies upon the ecclesial leader to enforce this guardianship of sacred space.

As we have already seen, however, it is within this same treatise that Tertullian moves into a description of the bishop as a *sacerdos* who must

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50 *De Pud.* 4.5, *CCSL* 2:1287.

51 *De Pud.* 13.7, *CCSL* 2:1304.

52 Harold W. Turner, *From Temple to Meeting House: The Phenomenology and Theology of Places of Worship* (New York: Mouton, 1979), 22.

53 "Le seuil est à la fois la borne, la frontier qui distingue et oppose deux mondes…." Mircea Eliade, *Le sacré et le profane* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), 24.

ensure this *sanctitas* of the church. Indeed, in 20.1, referring to the warnings of Hebrews 6, Tertullian avers: "Therefore the teaching of the apostles specifically instructs and principally designates the guaranty of all sanctity (*sanctitatis omnis*) toward the Temple of God (*templum Dei*) and everywhere eradicates from the church (*ab ecclesia*) every sacrilege of immodesty without any mention of restitution."[54] The Christian *ecclesia* is thus likened to the *templum dei*, and the responsibility of church leaders is to ensure its sanctity (*sanctitas*). Given the architectural vocabulary and earlier admonitions within the previous context, Tertullian clearly has in mind here the physical exclusion of the sinner from the sacred worship space of the church. One preserves the sanctity of the Temple by preventing the sinner from crossing its boundaries and entering its space.

This moves Tertullian into a discussion of the "types" (*figurae*) within the old Law which demand the same action (*De Pud.* 20.5). There, the Christian leader, as we saw earlier, is likened to a Levitical priest whose responsibilities include preserving the purity of Israel and its worship space by declaring people and things clean or unclean and by determining who can come to worship and who cannot. Cleanliness laws act as *figurae* for the laws of the church, and the old covenant priests become figures for Christian ecclesial leaders, likewise called *sacerdotes*. Thus, according to Tertullian, one who commits adultery after baptism "is now to be judged unclean and is not to be expiated by a priest (*sacerdote*);"[55] rather, he is to be excluded from the worship place, not permitted to cross the threshold of the architectural space. For Tertullian, his understanding of the Christian minister as a *sacerdos* is linked explicitly with his duties to guard the sacred space of the worshipping community, much as the ancient Levitical priests guarded the *sanctitas* of the Israelite community.

Conclusion

Thus, the Levitical priest who guards the Temple and preserves the sanctity of the sacred worship space becomes a type (*figura* / *forma*) for the Christian bishop who guards the *limen* of the church, preserving its *sanctitas* by excluding the sinner from its midst. In other words, Tertullian joins the notion of the bishop as a priest to his awareness of an emerging Christian material culture.

54 *De Pud.* 20.1, *CCSL* 2:1323.
55 *De Pud.* 20.7, *CCSL* 2:1324.

Furthermore, Tertullian's religio-political understanding of the church as an alternate public society in the Roman world, fulfilling the *figurae* of ancient Israel both in its leadership and its sacred space, enables him to appropriate the Levitical priesthood as a working typology for the Christian leadership such that the Christian bishop is designated a *sacerdos*. Just as the old covenant priests guarded the sanctity of the place of worship, so too Christian bishops were responsible to guard the sacred worship space of the church in their role as *sacerdotes*.

Tertullian, then, provides the first indication of an understood relationship between a Christian ministerial priesthood and a religio-political ecclesiology in the context of an emerging Christian material culture. In the chapters to come, I will demonstrate that later writers continued to designate the Christian leader as a priest in conjunction with a similar religio-political ecclesiology and an awareness of a Christian material culture.

· 3 ·

ATTENDANTS OF THE LORD

The Apostolic Tradition

One of the earliest textual witnesses to a regular and repeated reference to the Christian bishop as a priest,[1] particularly in the liturgical rites for the ordination of a bishop, is the so-called *Apostolic Tradition* of third-century

1 There are a couple of minor examples of priestly language being used in conjunction with Christian leadership earlier than the third century. *Didache* 13, for example, calls the Christian prophet a "high priest," but only a single time, and no other text of the second century follows suit in calling the Christian prophet (or any other Christian leader) a "high-priest." Not much more can be said here except that the *Didache* represents an anomaly of explicit priestly nomenclature for Christian leadership at this early stage. Likewise, *1 Clement* 40–44 employs the Levitical priesthood as an analogy for the order (*taxis*) of Christian leadership. It is important to observe, however, that Clement also uses (in the same context) images of the cosmic array and military structures to drive home the importance of order in the community. As comfortable as Clement is with drawing upon priestly, even Levitical, paradigms for Christian leadership, his main concern is for *taxis* and not in explicitly designating any Christian leader a *hiereus*. Robert Noll rightly cautions, "To say that in paragraphs 43 and 44 Clement was trying to make the Christian *episcope* into a priesthood, is to miss the whole point of the analogy," namely that *taxis*, not priesthood, is the issue at stake (Robert Ray Noll, *Christian Ministerial Priesthood: A search for its beginning in the primary documents of the Apostolic Fathers* [San Francisco: Catholic Scholars Press, 1993], 79).

Rome.[2] For this reason alone, the *Apostolic Tradition* (hereafter AT) is an invaluable and illuminating source for understanding the development of priestly nomenclature for Christian ministers in the early church. Yet, there are also broader reasons for turning to a text like the AT. Although the usefulness of a genre of "church order" has been increasingly called into question,[3] the AT

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2 Within the last hundred years, there has been no shortage of essays, monographs and books on the topics of authorship, dating and provenance of the *Apostolic Tradition*. Particularly in more recent years, the traditional perspective that the AT was a third-century Roman church order has been seriously questioned (see for example, J.A. Cerrato, "The Association of the Name Hippolytus with a Church Order now known as *The Apostolic Tradition*," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 48.2 [2004]: 179–194; J.A. Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West: The Commentaries and the Provenance of the Corpus* [Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2002], esp. 26–68; John Baldovin, "Hippolytus and the *Apostolic Tradition*: Recent Research and Commentary," *Theological Studies* 64 [2003]: 520–542; Paul Bradshaw, "Who Wrote the *Apostolic Tradition*? A Response to Alistair Stewart-Sykes," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 48.2 [2004]: 195–206; Paul Bradshaw, "The Problems of a New Edition of the *Apostolic Tradition*," in *Comparative Liturgy Fifty Years After Anton Baumstark (1872–1948)*, ed. Robert F. Taft and Gabriele Winkler [Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2001], 613–622; and Matthieu Smyth, "L'anaphore de la prétendue 'tradition apostolique' et la prière eucharistique romaine," *RevSR* 81 [2007]: 109–116.

As important and interesting as these challenges are, I follow the traditional argument for a mid-third century Roman provenance and dating. Although the document was likely written over a period of time, by two or three generations of authors (see Allen Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century: Communities in Tension Before the Emergence of a Monarch-Bishop* [New York: Brill, 1995], 402–405), the ordination prayers (and thus the priestly designations) can be dated quite plausibly to the early to mid-third century, and could very well reflect traditional material from an even earlier period. For arguments in defense of the traditional perspective, along with responses to more recent challenges, see Alistair Stewart-Sykes, ed., *Hippolytus: On the Apostolic Tradition* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), esp. 17–19; Alistair Stewart-Sykes, "*Traditio Apostolica*: The Liturgy of Third-Century Rome and the Hippolytean School, or Quomodo Historia Liturgica Conscribenda Sit," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 48.2 (2004): 233–248; Allen Brent, "St. Hippolytus, Biblical Exegete, Roman Bishop, and Martyr," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 48.2 (2004): 207–231; and Brent, *Hippolytus and Roman Church*, 3–50.

Although the course of this chapter will proceed along these traditional lines, it should be noted that my thesis does not *depend* upon Roman provenance (even though it comports quite well with it). For those who insist on an eastern origin for the AT, my thesis works equally well (see chapter 4, pp. 102–104, for evidence of an emerging material culture there).

3 Most recently, see Joseph G. Mueller, "The Ancient Church Order Literature: Genre or Tradition?," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 15.3 (2007): 337–380.

and the ordination rites contained within it offer an explicit portrait of early Christian liturgical and communal life. They speak explicitly to the issue of Christian order and structure, describing the very fabric of Christian thought and practice for that and later communities. In this capacity, the AT stands as the (sometimes invisible) backdrop to later developing thought on Christian identity and organization. When examining later expressions of theological development, one must be conscious not only of those explicit theological articulations, but also of the underlying life of the worshipping Christian communities. Just as the actual practice of baptism in the life of the church has shaped the Christian understanding of baptism, and the regular participation in the Eucharist has shaped Christian perspective on the rite itself, so also when early Christians reflected on the understanding of the bishop or presbyter, they were not arriving at independent conclusions. Rather, they were working within and affected by a milieu of actual Christian experience and order, an experience and order defined by custom and practice, especially as evidenced in the ordination prayers and liturgies of the worshipping communities.[4]

Thus, a document like the AT is significant precisely as a shaping influence and background to later Christian thought. As Gregory Dix suggests, the *Apostolic Tradition* is "the most illuminating single source of evidence extant on the inner life and religious polity of the early Christian Church."[5] This window into the inner life and thought of the worshipping community thus stands as a useful reference point to gauge development and transition in a variety of theological developments within early Christianity. More important,

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4 I am starting from the perspective that the church orders actually represent community life and order to a fair extent. It is possible that such documents do provide an idealized perspective in certain instances, but I reject the notion that the church orders attempt to create and propagate new liturgical realities, rather than reflect existing practices (a view held, e.g., by Allen Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church*, 458, in regards to monarchial episcopacy; and John F. Baldovin, "Hippolytus and the *Apostolic Tradition*," 542. See also Paul Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy*, 2nd ed. [Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2002), 95–97). I generally agree with Bernard Botte: "Ce n'est pas une description de 'la liturgie romaine' du IIIe siècle à l'état pur; mais il est encore beaucoup moins vraisemblance qu'Hippolyte [or the Hippolytan community] ait présenté une description qui n'avait aucune rapport avec la réalité vécue à Rome" (Botte, *La tradition apostolique: d'apres les anciennes versions*, 2nd ed. rev., *SC* 11bis [Paris : Éditions du Cerf, 1984], 17).

5 Gregory Dix, *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome, Bishop and Martyr* (London: Alban Press, 1992), ix.

this document should also be of integral use in gaining an understanding of why priestly designations were appropriated by early Christian communities.

Surprisingly little attention has been given to the AT as an important source in addressing this question about the emergence of a Christian ministerial priesthood. Those who have, tend to follow the consensus that an emerging Christian priesthood was connected primarily with Eucharistic sacrifice. P.M. Gy, for example, argues that the AT's "anaphora testifies here that the act of the bishop in the eucharistic prayer is a *ierateuein*."[6] Likewise, John Stam suggests that "the unique Eucharistic prerogative of the bishop was based upon his high-priesthood."[7] More recently, Colin Bulley has broadened the idea of sacrifice in the AT to include more than the Eucharistic offering, but he nevertheless continues to link priesthood with notions of sacrifice.[8] Thus, when considering the question of the rise of a Christian ministerial priesthood in the AT itself, the accepted consensus in seeing the connection between priesthood and the Eucharistic sacrifice is generally maintained.

Ostensibly, this explanation seems reasonable; yet a careful examination of the AT itself will reveal the limitations of such a hypothesis. As will be demonstrated, the text of the AT, and the ordination rites for a bishop in particular, suggest that while the Eucharistic sacrifice plays a part in understanding the bishop as a priest, it by no means offers the fullest explanation. Rather, a more comprehensive understanding of the AT's bishop-priest designations involves an ecclesiological dimension. Joseph Mueller's recent article on early Christian church orders, in which he sees not a "genre" of "church order," but a "tradition of ecclesiological Old Testament exegesis," is highly suggestive in this direction.[9]

The present chapter will explore this ecclesiological line of analysis, with direct focus on the priestly designations in the AT, while also expanding this ecclesiological observation in new ways. In particular, this undercurrent of ecclesiological tradition in the AT's priestly designations is not simply conceptual and abstract, but physical and spatial as well. That is, a growing Christian self-identity both *conceptually* in relation to ancient Israel, and *spatially* in relation to an emerging, fixed Christian material culture, provides

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6 P.M. Gy, "Ancient Ordination Prayers," *Studia Liturgica* 13.2–3 (1979): 87.

7 John Stam, *Episcopacy in the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus* (Basel: Komm. Friedrich Reinhardt, 1969), 99.

8 Bulley, *Priesthood*, 78–85.

9 Mueller, "Church Order," esp. 365–380.

a favorable and sufficient context in which the early Christian community begins to appropriate and apply the ancient Israelite priesthood as a paradigm for Christian leadership. In turn, the tasks and functions of the Israelite priesthood (particularly in connection with its attention to the physical Temple) are freely and consciously applied to the Christian ministerial leadership in its task of liturgical service and spatial responsibility as "attendants of the Lord."

A Ministerial Priesthood in the Ordination Prayers

After a brief preface in which the community is urged in general terms to "guard the tradition (*traditionem… custodiant*) which has been handed down to us,"[10] the text quickly moves to matters of proper order, beginning with procedures for the ordination of a bishop. The people having been called together on the Lord's Day, hands are laid upon the bishop to be ordained, while another bishop present is instructed to pray. AT 3 delineates the ordination prayer over the bishop, preserved in Greek in the Epitome.[11]

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10 AT 1, *SC* 11bis: 38; also Bernard Botte, *La tradition apostolique de Saint Hippolyte: Essai de reconstitution* (Münster Westfalen: Aschendorf, 1989), 2. All translations are my own unless indicated otherwise.

11 A word on the complexity of the textual issues related to the AT: although originally written in Greek, no full Greek manuscript of the AT is extant. We do have Greek sections preserved in fragments and in the Epitome of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, and when possible, I will make use of these Greek versions. Additionally, there are numerous translations of the AT existing in Latin, Coptic, Arabic, and Ethiopic. Even here, the Ethiopic version is a translation based on an Arabic translation, which in turn is a translation based on the Coptic. Moreover, the Coptic, Arabic, and Ethiopic translations all date very late (11th –19th century). Bernard Botte has recognized the difficulties in the text-critical issues for the AT and has attempted a reconstruction of the Latin text with what he calls a "méthode philologique rigoureuse" (Botte, *La tradition apostolique* (1984), 18). In the end, Connolly, Schwartz, Botte, Stam and Stewart-Sykes all place great confidence in the Latin text of the AT. Estimated to date to the fifth century (based on a fourth-century Greek text), the Verona Latin "appears to be largely faithful to the Greek text" and "is the best witness to the writings of Hippolytus" (Stewart-Sykes, *Hippolytus*, 45–46). Dix notes that the Latin translator was "slavishly subservient to the exact form and construction of the fluent Greek of the sentences before him" (Dix, *Apostolic Tradition*, liv). Therefore, given the Latin version's early dating and slavishly literal rendering of the Greek, most scholars find the Verona Latin to be the best and most accurate authority for accessing the original AT (a notable exception would be Marcel Metzger, who objects to what he calls Botte's "texte fantome" [Metzger, "Enquêtes autour de la prétendue *tradition apostolique*," *Ecclesia*

Of significance here are the descriptions of functions and titles given to the bishop in this prayer. The prayer requests that God would "pour out from yourself the power of the spirit of leadership (*dunamin tou hēgemonikou pneumatos*)" and then,

> give to your servant whom you chose for the episcopate [the ability] to shepherd (*poimainein*) your holy flock, to serve you blamelessly as high-priest (*archierateuein*), ministering (*leitourgounta*) night and day, to appease (*hilaskesthai*) your face without ceasing, to offer (*prospherein*) to you the gifts (*ta dōra*) of your holy church, and by the spirit of the high-priesthood (*tōi pneumati tōi archieratikō*) to have power to forgive sins according to your command, to ordain (*didonai klērous*)[12] according to your ordinance, to loose every bond according to the authority which you gave to the apostles, and to please you with gentleness and a pure heart, offering (*prospheronta*) to you the scent of fragrance through your Son…[13]

Here lies one of the most thorough and illuminating lists of functions for the bishop in early Christian communities, and from this prayer we also have one of the most explicit early designations of the bishop in priestly terms and ideals. In examining this prayer two issues deserve consideration. First we will briefly explore the tasks and responsibilities of the bishop as set forth in the ordination prayer. Second we will draw special attention to the relationship between these tasks and the biblical texts in general, and an Old Testament priestly paradigm in particular.

The priestly dimensions of the episcopal office are clearly indicated in this prayer. Yet it is more than a bald statement of theological pronouncement that the bishop is a "priest." Through a series of eight infinitives, the prayer indicates specific functions of the office: to shepherd, to serve as high-priest, to appease God's face, to offer the gifts, to forgive sins, to ordain, to loose every bond, and to please God. On the surface, these functions are a loose list of tasks and responsibilities; upon closer inspection, however, there is a discernible structure to the prayer, one which follows the "drama of redemption" from old covenant leadership in the priests to new covenant leadership under the apostles.

Orans 9 (1992): 22]). I will follow this general consensus, using the Latin text as the basis of most translations, while employing Greek texts where available.

12 Lit. "to give lots." Botte has noted that this term appears throughout the AT to refer to the ecclesiastical charge, i.e. ordination (see Botte, *Essai de reconstitution* (1989), 11, n.1). See Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 1.27.1; 3.3.2–3 for a similar usage of the term to refer to ordination.

13 AT 3, *SC* 11[bis]: 42–46; also Botte, *Essai de reconstitution* (1989), 6–10.

The second infinitive in the list, "to serve as high-priest" (*archierateuein*), is the most obvious point at which the sacerdotal nature of the bishop shows forth. One of the main functions of the bishop, according to this prayer, is to act as a high-priest, specifically, by ministering (*leitourgounta*) night and day. Part of what it means, then, to "serve as high-priest" includes this perpetual ministry. One must not miss the Old Testament evocations of this task, however. The verb (*leitourgein*) is one commonly used in reference to the Old Testament priest. For example, Exodus 35:19 details instructions for making the priestly garments, "in which they will minister (*leitourgēsousin*) in the holy place."[14] In the prophecy of Ezekiel, a holy district is to be measured off which "shall be for the priests, who minister (*tois leitourgousin*) in the sanctuary and approach the LORD to minister (*leitourgein*) to him" (45:4). Likewise, the prophet Joel repeatedly narrates the task of the priest as one who "ministers to the LORD" (1:9,13; 2:17, all using forms of *leitourgein*). The description of the bishop as one who is ministering (*leitourgounta*) suggests this Old Testament picture of priesthood.

Further, the command to serve "night and day" (*nuktos kai hēmeras*) also evokes the specifically Israelite priestly task in regards to temple caretaking. In Leviticus the people are commanded to bring oil to the Tabernacle for the lamps which were to burn continually. Aaron is then instructed "to keep it in order from evening to morning before the Lord (*apo hesperas heōs prōi enōpion kyriou*) continually" (24:2–4). Exodus 30:7–8 instructs Aaron the priest to burn incense on the altar in the morning and at evening, and Numbers 28:1–8 gives similar instructions for sacrifices to be offered daily, morning (*to prōi*) and evening (*hesperan*). The reference in AT 3 to this continual ministerial function ("night and day") suggests yet another connection with the Israelite priesthood. Just as the old covenant priests performed their daily tasks, so the Christian bishop is called to "minister night and day" by performing his liturgical duties on a daily basis.

The other functions found in this prayer, such as appeasing God's face and offering gifts, are also priestly tasks. The Greek term (*hilaskesthai*) carries with it the notion of propitiation; combining this with the task of offering gifts, we have a distinctly priestly array of tasks. While is not clear from this prayer how the bishop is to propitiate, nevertheless, one need not read far in Leviticus to realize that the duties of offering sacrifices and effecting atonement before the

14 Biblical citations follow the RSV unless indicated otherwise. Greek words indicate the LXX.

Lord was a significant task of the old covenant priests.[15] In light of this biblical picture, the AT portrayal of the bishop as one who appeases (*hilaskesthai*) and offers gifts (*prospherein*) clearly evokes the biblical presentation of priestly duties. That one of the first tasks of the bishop after ordination was to preside over the Eucharistic celebration shows that this task of "offering" was an important part of what it meant to be a bishop-priest.[16] Three of the first four tasks of the episcopacy are thus centered on the priestly dimension of leadership.[17] Of the episcopal tasks listed in this ordination prayer, the primary Old Testament biblical "type" used to portray the bishop is that of "priest."

What then of the remaining infinitives, those one might designate as new covenant, apostolic tasks? The remaining list (to forgive sins, to ordain, to loose bonds) are quite easily seen to be "apostolic" functions when viewed through a New Testament lens. The function of forgiving sins is mentioned in John 20:23. Here, Jesus commissions the disciples, breathing on them and saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." The AT alludes to this event, noting that the power to forgive is "according to your command."[18] Likewise, several examples are given of the apostles "ordaining" or "commissioning" new generations of leadership.[19] Acts 1:26, in the apostolic ordination of Matthias

15 Consider, for example, Lev 27 and Num 18.

16 See AT 4 for this post-ordination activity.

17 Though not as obvious, this also remains true for the first task listed, "to shepherd" (*poimainein*). Although not exclusively a priestly image, shepherding was clearly an important biblical metaphor for the spiritual leaders of Israel, and this would have included the priests. Jeremiah 23 and Ezekiel 34 both castigate the shepherd-leaders for their self-interest and their failure to protect the flock of Israel. Because they have been "feeding themselves" (Ezek 34:2) and "have scattered the flock and not attended to them" (Jer 23:2), God declares, "I am against the shepherds" (Ezek 34:10). Given Ezekiel's deep concern for the defilement and promised renewal of the Temple (ch. 40–48), it is no stretch to understand the priests as the 'shepherd'-referents in his proclamations. The passage in Jeremiah 23 seems to have both prophets and priests in mind when speaking of the shepherds of Israel (cf. 23:11). This image of leadership in the Old Testament, picked up by the AT, connects the task of the bishop to that of the spiritual leadership of Israel, including the priests. For a detailed examination of the shepherd motif in the Old Testament, see V. Hamp, "Das Hirtenmotiv im Alten Testament," in *Festschrift Kardinal Faulhaber zum achtzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. Professorenkollegium der philosophisch-theologischen Hochschule Freising (München: J. Pfeiffer, 1949), 7–20.

18 AT 3.

19 See Acts 1:26; 6; 14:23; also 1 Tim 4:14

to replace Judas Iscariot, describes this action as "casting lots (*edōkanklērous*) and the lot (*ho klēros*) fell on Matthias." Thus, the description in AT 3 "to ordain"/"to give lots" (*edōkan klērous*) uses the same language found in Acts and evokes the apostolic ministry of ordination seen there. Further, Jesus instructs Peter, after his confession of Jesus as the Messiah: "whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19). Clearly, the AT prayer regarding the power to "loose every bond" points to this apostolic commission by Jesus. All these tasks (to forgive sins, to ordain, to loose bonds) are explicitly connected to apostolic authority and power.

Yet, even here, the connection with the old covenant metaphor remains as the priestly principle permeates these new covenant tasks. After the first four explicitly priestly functions of the bishop are delineated, the prayer asks that God would grant the newly-elect "to have power by the spirit of the high-priesthood (*tōi pneumati tōi archieratikō*)" to exercise the list of tasks we saw to be "apostolic" in nature. Placed as it is at the beginning of the list of infinitives, this dative phrase (*tōi pneumati tōi archieratikō*) has the force of governing all the remaining verbs in the sentence. Thus, even the tasks of forgiving sins, ordaining, and loosing bonds are all depicted as operating out of this *priestly-spirit* dimension of authority. The movement from the metaphors of old covenant leadership to new covenant leadership is not a depiction of two separate structures of leadership, but of a continuity between an older model and a newer one. In this sense, the AT portrays the bishop not in parallel with priests on the one hand and apostles on the other, but with the priests primarily through the priestly ministry instituted by Christ through the apostles.

Thus from this perspective, the tasks that were seen previously as "apostolic" should now also be seen in a priestly light. Further reflection on these functions results in just such connections with biblical priesthood, though not as explicit as the earlier tasks in the list. For example, ordaining was an important role of priests in the Old Testament. Leviticus 8 details the ordination ceremony of Aaron and his sons by Moses, but also was to be used as the ordination procedures for the installation of future priests.[20] Numbers 8 is especially provocative in its description of priestly ordination wherein the people are instructed to "lay their hands upon the Levites" (8:10), an action also paralleled in AT 2.

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20 Note also that Moses, not just Aaron, was considered a priestly figure in the Old Testament; cf. Ps. 99:6 ("Moses and Aaron were among his priests").

The ability to effect forgiveness through the proper performance of sacrifice was also a priestly function in the Old Testament. Finally, binding and loosing can more broadly be understood as correlating to the Levitical task to declare clean or unclean those who were affected with illness or disease.[21] Interestingly, the bishop is also designated the "high-priest" (*princeps sacerdotum*) in AT 34 where instructions are given for the bishop to visit the sick, perhaps another allusion to the idea of the bishop as ministering to the Christian sick, just as the sick/unclean Israelite would seek out the priests in the Old Testament.

This examination, then, demonstrates that the entire description of the bishop in this ordination prayer can be subsumed under the broader portrayal of the bishop as priest.[22] All the listed functions and duties hang around the central notion that the bishop is acting as the high-priest of the people of God. Rather than dividing the list between priestly tasks and apostolic tasks, as Bradshaw does, it is more accurate to understand the entire list (which entails Old Testament and New Testament imagery) as subsumed under the priesthood motif.[23]

Note, then, that the high-priesthood of the bishop is related not merely to the offering of the Eucharist, but to a whole range of functions and responsibilities. In fact, one could argue from this ordination prayer that the offering of the Eucharist was not seen as the main function of the bishop-as-priest at all. Priestly designations for the bishop in the AT do not stem primarily from his role as one who offers the Eucharistic sacrifice, but more broadly as one who governs the church, shepherding and protecting God's flock, and as one who presides over the general liturgical aspects of the church, including but not limited to the Eucharist. The connection between Eucharistic sacrifice and the bishop's role in making that offering is important, but it is not the entire picture.

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21 As a parallel, one might consider the way Tertullian employs the Levitical cleanliness laws in a similar way in his treatise *De Pud.* 20. See earlier chapter.

22 The last infinitive in the series, "to please God" seems much too general to elicit a specifically priestly evocation, yet the added phrase, "offering the scent of fragrance" does lead us back to a priestly image. Also, the notion of "guarding the tradition" found in the preface may also correlate to the Old Testament priestly task of "guarding the tabernacle" (e.g. Num 3:3,38), though certainly not explicit.

23 See Paul Bradshaw, "Ordination," in *Essays on Hippolytus*, eds. ibid et al (Bramcote: Grove Books, 1978), 37, wherein he proffers a sharper distinction than I think the text warrants.

Along similar lines, the ordination prayer for deacons comments that the bishop alone, not the presbyters, should lay hands on the deacon-elect, "for the reason that he is not ordained into the priesthood (*in sacerdotio*), but into the service of the bishop."[24] It would seem that the laying of hands by other presbyters upon the newly ordained is somehow connected with being ordained into the priesthood. By comparison, the preceding instructions for ordaining a presbyter include both the bishop laying hands upon the one to be ordained while the other presbyters also touch him. No explicit mention is made of the priesthood here; yet for deacons the text makes a point of excluding them from the priesthood. One major difference between the two ordination services has to do with the involvement of presbyters laying hands or not. In other words, by implication, the presbyters *are* part of the priesthood, and it would seem that their laying of hands along with the bishop would also have made the deacon a part of that *ordo*. This is striking because the deacons, more so than the presbyters, assisted in performing the liturgy of the Eucharist. If the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice was the reason for the priesthood designations, then the deacons, it would seem, should at this very point be named priests. The AT, however, is emphatic that they are not. From the opposite angle, the presbyters, who are never said to preside solely over the Eucharist,[25] *are* implied to be part of the priesthood. It would seem that the nature of this "priesthood" (for the bishop and the presbyters alike) entailed more than merely presiding over the sacrifice of the Eucharist. The portrayal of their priesthood is much more comprehensive.

The functions of the bishop, as understood by the church, seem to have led to theological reasoning upon those duties which in turn led to the application of the sacerdotal paradigm to the office of the bishop. It was not the single function of offering the Eucharistic sacrifice, but the accumulated force of all the leadership functions including shepherding, appeasing God, ministering, offering gifts, and so on, that produce the theological development regarding the bishop-priest.

What, then, can explain this theological understanding of the episcopal office? As indicated earlier, the answer involves an emerging religio-political

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24 AT 8, *SC* 11bis: 58; also Botte, *Essai de reconstitution* (1989), 22.

25 See Anscar Chupungco who raises this point ("Ordination Theology in the Apostolic Tradition," in *Mysterium Christi: Symbolgegenwart und theologische Bedeutung: Festschrift für Basil Studer,* eds. Magnus Löhrer and Elmar Salmann [Rome: Pontificio Ateneo S Anselmo, 1995], 121–122).

ecclesiology. On the one hand, in their religious or theological identity, Christians began to solidify the affirmation of its continuity with ancient Israel, an identification which included all its robust cultural, political, institutional and liturgical life. On the other hand, there was also a growing awareness of itself as a concrete, visible reality—a society with an emerging public material culture, occupying actual space and place, and involving distinct rituals and property which formed its cultural life in the Roman world. Together, these two ecclesiological aspects (its religious and political identity) form a context from which a Christian ministerial priesthood could emerge.

Religio-Political Ecclesiology: Continuity with Israel

The same ordination prayer that portrays the tasks and functions of the bishop in priestly dimensions also gives us a clear picture of the continuity assumed in the prayer between Israel and the Christian community. Prior to listing the episcopal tasks, the AT instructs the ordaining bishop to pray:

> God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who inhabits the heights and looks upon the poor, who knows all things before they happen, you who gave the rules of the church (*horous ekklēsias*)[26] by your word of grace, who foreordained from the beginning a righteous race (*genos dikaion*) from Abraham, establishing rulers and priests (*archontas te kai hiereis*) and not abandoning your sanctuary (*hagiasma sou*) without ministers (*aleitourgēton*), who was from the foundation of the world pleased to be glorified in those whom you have chosen…[27]

This prayer then moves into the requests that God pour out his spirit to enable the bishop-elect to perform the numerous priestly tasks examined above.

From this prayer, the continuities between the old and the new become obvious. At four separate points this continuity holds. First, there is a continuity between the God of the old covenant and the God of the new. The series of descriptive phrases in the beginning of the prayer are a mixture of material from the Old and New Testaments. The "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Father of mercies and God of all comfort" reflects New Testament theology, quoting directly 2 Corinthians 1:3. Yet, this new covenant God is linked with

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26 Further explanation for the translation will be given below.

27 AT 3, *SC* 11[bis]: 42–44; also Botte, *Essai de reconstitution* (1989), 6–10.

the actions and activity of the old covenant God as the prayer continues. He is the God "who inhabits the heights and looks upon the poor," a passage taken from Psalm 112:5–6, as well as the God "who knows all things before they happen," a quotation from Susanna 35. Thus, the early portion of this ordination prayer expresses an intimate continuity between the God of Israel and the God of the church.

Second, there is a continuity between the old and new "people of God." The prayer comments that God has "foreordained from the beginning a righteous race (*genos dikaion*) from Abraham." The words imply the notion that the "righteous race" is now carried forth by the Christian community, the new people of God. In the following chapter, the newly elected bishop presides over a Eucharistic celebration; during his Eucharistic prayer, the bishop thanks God for Jesus Christ who "fulfilled your will and acquired for you a holy people (*populum sanctum*)."[28] This phrase, *populum sanctum*, echoes the earlier phrase *genos dikaion*, connecting the ideas of old and new. Whereas Israel was constituted "a holy people" to the Lord,[29] so too Christians are depicted as a "holy people," the righteous race from Abraham.[30]

Third, there is a continuity between the old and new sanctuaries of God. After the prayer above, the bishop asks God to pour out his spirit of governance "which you gave through your beloved child Jesus Christ to your holy apostles, who established (*kathidrusan*) the church in the place of your sanctuary (*kata topon hagiasmatos sou*)."[31] There is a new *topos/locus* ("place") of worship for the people of God.

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28 AT 4, *SC* 11[bis]: 50; also Botte, *Essai de reconstitution* (1989), 14.

29 See Ex 19:6 [holy nation—*ethnos hagion*]; Deut 7:6; 14:21; 26:19 [holy people—*laos hagios*].

30 See also, for example, 1 Pet 2.9–10 for ideas of the church being a holy people. See Gal 3 for ideas of Christians being the true inheritors of Abraham's promise.

31 AT 3, *SC* 11[bis]: 44; also Botte, *Essai de reconstitution* (1989), 8. The phrase *kata topon hagiasmatos sou* is admittedly difficult to translate. Botte prefers the Latin text which reads: *per singula loca sanctificationem tua*, making the translation: "who consecrated the church in every place as your sanctuary/sanctification." While this smoothes out the Greek, it also changes the nuance of the text. Although more difficult, the Greek reading is not altogether impossible. Jean Magne, for example, argues the necessity of using the Greek text over Botte's suggestion of the Latin, for several reasons: 1.) it is confirmed by a variant in the Ethiopic text and thus has support from two different textual families, 2.) if one alters the Greek to read "in every place" one is forced also to alter the genitive (of your sanctuary) into an accusative (as your sanctuary), as does Botte, and 3.) there are other ways to express in Greek the idea of universal diffusion, such as *en panti topoi* (Jean Magne, *Tradition apostolique sur les charismes et diataxeis des saints apôtres: Identification des documents et analyse du*

All this leads to the tight connection between old and new: the God, the people, the sanctuary. At every point, there is continuity and transformation from the old model to the new. Given this strong connection and development, one can readily see how this lends itself to the expression of continuity at a fourth point as well: between old and new leadership. Examining the AT further, this is exactly what presents itself.

In the early portion of the ordination prayer of chapter 3, the congregation is reminded that the God of old "gave the rules of the church" (*horous ekklēsias*). The translation difficulty here is noted by most scholars, and translations vary from "ordinances"[32] to "les règles"[33] to "limits"[34] to "canons."[35] Nowhere in the LXX is this term used to designate the "ordinances" of Israel regarding leaders, yet this clearly seems to be the implication in AT 3. Following Brent's observations, we find that *horos* is also used in *Refutation of All Heresies* at several points to describe Zephyrinus and Callistus as ignorant of the "ecclesiastical orders" (*ho ekklēsiastikos horos*).[36] Thus, if one takes the cues from this other source (one which lies in the same family of texts and tradition as the AT), understanding the *horous ekklēsias* of AT 3 as referring to the canonical, hierarchical structures of the church makes sense. In this context, the referent clearly implies a connection between the "rules" or "structures" of the old covenant and the "rules" regarding the ordination of bishops in the church. Thus, for the AT, a continuity exists between old and new leadership structures as well.

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rituel des ordinations (Paris: Magne, 1975), 120). Moreover, Liddell and Scott note that *kata* when taken with an accusative can have a range of meaning including "in," "over against" or even referring to likeness ("like" or "as"). (LSJ, 9th ed. with new supplement, 883). Any of these readings makes perfect sense not only of the following accusative (*topon*) but also of the following genitive (*hagiasmatos sou*). Thus the Greek suggests that the church was established "in the place of your sanctuary," "over against the place of your sanctuary" or "as the place of your sanctuary." Whichever option one chooses, the force of the text remains: the church is likened to the old sanctuary of God.

32 Dix, *Apostolic Tradition*, 4.

33 Botte, *La tradition apostolique* (1984), 43 ; also Botte, *Essai de reconstitution* (1989), 7.

34 Stewart-Sykes, *Hippolytus*, 60.

35 Brent, *Hippolytus and Roman Church*, 303.

36 *Refutation of All Heresies* 9.11.1; 9.12.21; and 10.5.1–2 (M. Marcovich, *Hippolytus. Refutatio omnium haeresium*. Patristische Texte und Studien 25 [Berlin: De Gruyter, 1986], 53–417). Brent, *Hippolytus and Roman Church*, 303, and Joseph Lecuyer also suggest similar ideas ("Episcopat et presbyterat dans les écrits d'Hippolyte de Rome," *Recherches de science religieuse* 41 [1953], 32).

Just one line later, the prayer recalls that God established "rulers and priests (*archontas te kai hiereis*)" and did not abandon "your sanctuary without ministers (*hagiasma sou aleitourgēton*)."[37] Several times throughout the LXX, the phrase "rulers and priests" is applied to the civil and religious leaders of the people of Israel and other nations. For example, Nehemiah 12:12 declares that "in the days of Joiakim were priests and rulers (*hoi hiereis kai hoi archontes*)",[38] and then recounts the list of names of these Israelite leaders. Jeremiah 48:7 pronounces judgment on Moab, "his priests and his rulers" (*hiereis autou kai hoi archontes autou*).[39] Thus, the AT prayer directly evokes the Old Testament imagery of leadership. Further, the prayer reminds the congregation of the faithfulness of God in not abandoning his people or his sanctuary (*hagiasma*). On the contrary, God always provides "ministers" (*leitourgoi*) for his people. Again, in this context, the assertion of the prayer is that God maintains his faithfulness by providing his people with continued leadership, namely, the bishops of the Christian community.

In light of the earlier conclusions regarding the church being established "in the place of your sanctuary" (*kata topon hagiasmatos sou*), the connection is made even stronger here: the "ministers" which God supplies are in fact the bishops being ordained to serve the new "sanctuary" of the church. Once again, the continuity holds between old covenant leadership and new, the "rulers and priests" of Israel typifying the Christian bishops.

Perhaps the strongest expression of this link between old and new leadership comes in the next chapter, AT 4. As the newly ordained bishop presides over the Eucharistic service, he prays: "we offer to you the bread and cup, giving thanks to you because you have held us worthy to stand before you and to minister to you (*adstare coram te et tibi ministrare*)."[40] Peter Leithart has persuasively demonstrated that the overarching aspect of Old Testament priesthood was in their responsibility as "attendants of Yahweh's house."[41] In particular, the verbs "to stand and minister" form the repeated summary

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37 AT 3, *SC* 11bis: 42–44; also Botte, *Essai de reconstitution* (1989), 6–8.

38 LXX=2Esdr 22.12

39 LXX=Jer 31.7. Amos 1.15 is another text using this double title for leadership. See Andre Rose for fuller development ("Le prière de consécration pour l'ordination épiscopale," in *Au service de la parole de Dieu*, ed André-Marie Charue [Gembloux: J Duculot, 1969], 133).

40 AT 4, *SC* 11bis: 52; also Botte, *Essai de reconstitution* (1989), 16.

41 Peter Leithart, "Attendants of Yahweh's House: Priesthood in the Old Testament," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 85 (1999), 12ff.

expression of the priestly duty in the Old Testament. While the tasks of sacrifice, mediation, and guardianship were important for the priesthood, no description covers the full range of responsibilities as well as the idea of being an "attendant" in the sanctuary. Leithart's research shows that two verbs stand in regular connection with the noun *cohen* (*hiereus*/*sacerdos*): to "stand" and to "minister."[42] In addition to these verbs being used individually to describe the functions of Israelite priests,[43] there are a number of passages that combine them to form a summary description of the priestly work.

For example, Deuteronomy 10:8 states that the tribe of Levi was set apart "to stand before the LORD to minister to him" (Latin: *staret coram eo in ministerio*).[44] Likewise, Deuteronomy 18:5 explains the special privilege of the tribe of Levi as the one "chosen to stand and minister to the name of the LORD (*ut stet et ministret nomini Domini*)."[45] Such designations are also found outside of the Pentateuch. 1 Kings 8:11 describes the dedication of the Temple under Solomon wherein a cloud began to fill the new building "so that the priests could not stand to minister (*stare et ministrare*) because of the cloud."[46] Finally, in 2 Chronicles 29:11, under the reign of Hezekiah, repairs are made to the Temple. In a solemn ceremonial gathering of the priests and Levites, Hezekiah admonishes them: "do not now be negligent, for the LORD has chosen you to stand in his presence, to minister to him (*ut stetis coram eo et ministretis illi*)."[47] As Leithart summarizes: "A priest is one who has been given a permanent standing—both literally and metaphorically—in the house of God, and whose duties range from personal attendance upon Yahweh to stewardship and care of his house."[48]

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42 Leithart, "Attendants," 15–16. See also, Aelred Cody, *A History of Old Testament Priesthood* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute Press, 1969), 29.

43 For example, "to minister": Exod 35.19; 39.41; Neh 10.39; Ezek 45.4; Joel 1.9,13 and 2.17. "To stand": Zech 3.1; 2 Chr 30.16; 35.10.

44 LXX read: *parestanai enanti kyriou leitourgein*. I provide the Latin above to highlight the lexical similarities with the AT.

45 LXX reads: *parestanai enanti kyriou tou theou sou leitourgein*.

46 LXX reads: *stēnai enantion autou leitourgein*.

47 LXX reads: *stēnai enantion autou leitourgein*. Other such texts include Deut 17:12 and Num 16:9.

48 Leithart, "Attendants," 18–19. It may be noted that the texts in Deuteronomy and 2 Chronicles include additional functions such as burning incense, carrying the ark, and pronouncing blessings. Leithart's point, however, is not that "standing and ministering" are the only two functions ascribed to priests, but that these terms offer a kind of summative description

In light of the numerous continuities already expressed in AT 3 between old/new people, old/new sanctuary and old/new leadership, the summary description provided in AT 4 about "standing and ministering" should come as no surprise. The bishop-priest, typifying and modeling the Israelite priest, is called "to stand before you and to minister" (*adstare coram te et tibi ministrare*), the very summary language and description of the old covenant priests of Israel as found in the Old Testament.

Thus the continuity assumed between Israel and the Christian community is woven into the theological understanding of the bishop as priest. The continuity expressed between the God of Israel and the God of the church, between the old people and the new people of God, and between the old sanctuary and the new, all work in conjunction with the express idea of continuity between leadership. The bishop is the "minister" of God's people and his sanctuary, the church. As John Stam puts it, "a continuity is seen between the Old Covenant and the New in the unity of the one divine plan for the ordered life of God's people."[49] Bernard Botte suggests this same connection, contending that in the AT

> the church is the new people of God and, at the same time, the new Temple established from now on in every place. But God has never left his people without a leader nor his sanctuary without a priest and one demands from him that he do the same for the new Israel. It is the bishop who ought to be, by law, the leader of the new people of God and the high-priest of the new Temple.[50]

The *Apostolic Tradition's* presentation of the bishop as the one who typifies priestly leadership finds its roots in this deep-seated ecclesiological notion of continuity between Israel and the Christian community, the new people of God.

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of the priestly duties (all of the functions of the priest, from sacrifice, to temple care, to teaching, to judging, to mediation, can be summarized as their responsibility to attend to the Lord and his house, that is, to "stand and minister"). The important point for our argument is that the AT clearly evokes this very summative description of the Old Testament priesthood: "to stand and minister."

49 Stam, *Episcopacy*, 23.

50 "L'Église est le nouveau peuple de Dieu et, en même temps, le nouveau Temple établi désormais en tout lieu. Or Dieu n'a jamais laissé son peuple sans chef ni son sanctuaire sans sacerdoce et on lui demande qu'il fasse de même pour le nouvel Israël. C'est l'évêque qui doit être à la fois le chef du nouveau peuple de Dieu et le grand-prêtre du nouveau Temple." Botte, *La tradition apostolique* (1984), 26. See also Chupungco, "Ordination Theology," 114; Bradshaw, "Ordination," 37; and Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites of the Ancient Churches* (New York: Pueblo Pub., 1990), 47, for similar ideas.

One qualification must be added. Although the AT presumes a strong connection between old and new people, sanctuaries, and leaders, there are significant discontinuities as well. One of the most obvious, in relation to the priestly nature of the bishop, has to do with lineage. Whereas old covenant priests were such by way of physical blood line, Christian bishops were "chosen by all the people."[51] Their office derives not from hereditary assumption but from being elected or chosen by the people. In other words, although there is a continuity between Old Testament priesthood and episcopal leadership, there is also something strikingly different.[52] Joseph Lecuyer addresses this important distinction:

> The rulers and priests in the current church are not the successors of those of the Old Testament; in Christ are joined all the powers of those who preside over the elect and the cult of Israel; it is from Christ that the apostles have received those powers and from Christ that their successors, the bishops, continue to hold such powers.[53]

In other words, the bishops' function and office is modeled around the typology of Old Testament priesthood, but they are not Levitical priests in a literal sense. Rather, they are new covenant priests, fulfilling the typology of Old Testament priesthood through their participation and identity with Christ and his authority and ministry as given through his apostles.

This is made clear in the ordination prayer itself which states that the outpouring of the power of governance is that "which through your beloved

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51 AT 2, *SC* 11[bis]: 40; also Botte, *Essai de reconstitution* (1989), 4.

52 While the Levitical line was the hereditary line for priesthood (and therefore involved no election), it is worth noting that during the ministry of Moses, Aaron is "chosen" by God and Moses for the function of priesthood, and the people do give their assent (see this theme emphasized also in Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 4.14–17, 21, 23, 30–34, 54–58, 63–66; Philo, *De vita Mosis* 2.143 and *De specialibus legibus* 4.151–157. [I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for pointing out these texts to me]). Nevertheless there is a striking difference between an initial election which results in priesthood by lineage (such as the Aaronic/Levitical priesthood) and the election of bishops fully by the people as practiced by early Christians and stressed in AT 4.

53 " Les chefs et les prêtres, dans l'Église actuelle, ne sont pas les successeurs de ceux de l'Ancien Testament; c'est dans le Christ que se sont trouvés réunis tous les pouvoirs de ceux qui présidaient aux destinées et au culte d'Israël, c'est de lui que les Apôtres les ont reçus et que leurs successeurs, les évêques, continuent à les tenir." Joseph Lecuyer, "La prière d'ordination de l'évêque," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 89 (1967): 604.

son Jesus Christ you gave to your holy apostles."[54] The connection with Christ and the apostles as the mediating factor between old covenant leadership and new indicates not only the continuity from old to new but also transformation and discontinuity. That is, while Christian bishops were seen as typifying old covenant priests, that continuity with ancient Israel is nuanced by the newness that comes with Christ such that the bishop's "priestly" office is not merely a literal perpetuation of Levitical priesthood. The major episcopal-priestly functions, then, are not atoning through bloody sacrifices, but presiding over worship, shepherding, guarding the faith, and in general, standing and ministering before the Lord. These are all Old Testament priestly functions, but exercised in new ways in the new context of the early Christian community as the people of God, established by Christ and the apostles. Nevertheless, the Christian community is a corporate body intentionally identified with the historical, political and religious institution of ancient Israel.

These observations point us in the direction of seeing the church's growing ecclesiological awareness, specifically the continuity assumed with Israel, as a major factor in the rise and understanding of the priesthood of the episcopal office. Yet, this is not the complete picture or the fullest answer. From the beginning, Christians saw themselves in some sense as the fulfillment of Israel, or at least as the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel.[55] Certainly, after AD 70 and then AD 135, with the destruction of the Temple and the disappearance of the functioning locale of the Jewish priesthood, a way was made open for Christians to utilize more fully the old covenant sacerdotal ideas and structures as models for themselves. So, what other factors existed in the early third century that could combine with this solidifying religio-political ecclesiology in order to create a necessary context in which Old Testament priesthood could begin to work as a theological typology for Christian leadership?

Christian Material Culture and Sacred Space

Returning to Leithart's work, I wish to examine the AT's presentation of the bishop as priest in light of his conclusion that "a priest is one who has been given a permanent standing—both literally and metaphorically—in the house of God, and whose duties range from personal attendance upon Yahweh

54 AT 3, *SC* 11bis: 44; also Botte, *Essai de reconstitution* (1989), 8.

55 See for example Gal 3–4; 6:16; Rom 2:28–29.

to stewardship and care of his house."[56] In essence, priests in ancient Israel were servants of God "attached to a house of God,"[57] namely, the Temple or dwelling place of the Lord.[58] Moreover, Leithart demonstrates that the priestly ministry in the Old Testament is distinct not only by the tasks and functions they performed (which correlate with the tasks delineated in AT), but especially by the *location* of that work. Turning to Ezekiel 44, Leithart illustrates this facet of priesthood, showing God's judgment on the idolatrous Levites by curtailing their duties in "the house of the Lord." The judgment: "They shall not come near to me, to serve me as priest, nor come near any of my sacred things" (Ezek. 44:13). In contrast, the faithful Zadokites "shall come near to me to minister to me, and they shall attend on me… and they shall enter my sanctuary and they shall approach my table…" (Ezek. 44:15–16). The importance of space and place is prominent in Ezekiel's portrayal of priestly duties and definitions. Thus, Leithart concludes: "the distinction between priestly and non-priestly ministry is a matter of location in sacred space, and thus a matter of attachment and access to the house of Yahweh."[59]

It is this distinguishing factor of "place" or "sacred space" that bears significant fruit in exploring priestly developments in the early church, and in the AT in particular.[60] For, if Leithart's thesis is correct, an Old Testament

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56 Leithart, "Attendants," 18–19.

57 Leithart, "Attendants," 13.

58 Note, of course, that ancient Israel knew of shrines and temples outside Jerusalem (such as those at Shiloh, Dan, and Bethel), but that when early Christians reflected on the biblical picture of Israelite priesthood, they thought primarily of the Levitical priesthood connected with the temple in Jerusalem or with the Tabernacle established by Moses.

59 Leithart, "Attendants," 19.

60 The term "sacred space" is an increasingly difficult term to define with any sort of precision. One might, for example, speak of a place that is sacred "by essence," due to its intrinsic value, worth, or connection with the divine. Or, one might describe a place as sacred "by function," due to the way that space is used in service to the divine. When used in this chapter (and others), primarily the second meaning is intended, a functional, rather than essential, sacredness. That is, as will be shown, the Christian community of the AT understood their worship spaces and cemetery grounds as "sacred" by virtue of their being permanently and visibly set aside for cultic and ritual use in service to God. For discussions of the difficulties and meanings of the term "sacred" and "sacred space," see esp. Gretchen Buggeln, "New England Orthodoxy and the Language of the Sacred," in *American Sanctuary: Understanding Sacred Spaces*, ed. Louis P. Nelson (Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 2006), 17–36. I am indebted to her discussion of the distinction between "sacred by essence" and "sacred by function." See also Richard Kieckhefer, *Theology in Stone: Church Architecture*

priest is fundamentally defined as an attendant of God's house. The AT, as we have seen, portrays the Christian episcopacy as an office modeled around and reflecting the old covenant priesthood. One, therefore, would expect that the bishop-priest also would be, among other functions already listed, an attendant of God's house, or a personal attendant to God. Can this be demonstrated?

Literary Evidence

In fact, the *Apostolic Tradition* does show evidence of interest in "space" and "place." In chapter 3, as seen above, God is described as one who has not abandoned his "sanctuary without ministers" (*hagiasma sou aleitourgēton*). In one sense, to be sure, the reference to the "sanctuary" for which God provides "ministers" can be taken in a metaphorical and spiritualized way: the assembly of believers now forms the "sanctuary" of God. Yet, there seems to be more than mere metaphor. The "sanctuary" of old was a physical Temple located in a specific area. It could be located in space. Keeping this in mind, and continuing in the ordination prayer, one reads that the apostles "established the church in the place (*kata topon*) of your sanctuary." As argued above, the force of the text is that the church has replaced, was set up over against, the previous "sanctuary" of God. Even if one prefers Botte's reading ("in every place *as* your sanctuary"), the necessary point still remains that "place" (*topos*) holds curious significance. If the author had wished to suggest that the assembly of believers metaphorically replaced the old physical temple, a simple *anti* would suffice. Instead, the text specifically draws upon the idea of "place" (*topos* / *locus*) to express this idea. Though the English translations look the same ("in place of"), *anti* merely connotes an abstract "replacement" while *kata topon* or *per singula loca* evoke the idea of physical "space" and "place." As Klemens Richter argues, the AT suggests that although the old Temple of stone is no more, "yet the church still has meeting rooms (*Versammlungsraume*) on earth which are said to be the house of the Lord."[61] Although the *ekklēsia* may refer

from Byzantium to Berkley (New York: Oxford U.P., 2004); and Mircea Eliade, *Le sacré et le profane* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965).

61 "... doch hat die Kirche auf Erden noch Versammlungsraume, von denen gesagt wird, sie sind das haus des Herrn." Klemens Richter, "Zum Ritus der Bischofsordination in der 'Apostolischen Überlieferung' Hippolyts von Rom und davon abhängigen Schriften," *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 17 (1975): 27.

simply to the assembly of believers, the text of the AT seems also to stress something more tangible; whatever the "church" may be, it occupies "place" (*topos /locus*) and replaces the old space of the Temple sanctuary.

Later, in AT 4, the bishop thanks God that he has been deemed "worthy to stand before you and to minister to you." Given the context of the prayer, namely the liturgical role in the worship assembly, the words evoke a sense of real space, a definite location wherein the bishop actually "stands" and "ministers" before God. Likewise, in AT 8, the ordination prayer of a deacon petitions God to grant his Holy Spirit on him "whom you chose to minister to your church (*ministrare ecclesiae tuae*) and to offer in your holy of holies (*in sancto sanctorum tuo*) that which is offered to you by your appointed high-priest."[62] Again, the force of the text is that the church (*ecclesia*) is not just an abstract reality or a displaced assembly, but the new worship space paralleling the Temple's holy of holies. The tasks referenced in this prayer are the deacon's responsibilities in the liturgical worship setting and his assistant role in the Eucharist alongside the bishop. Given this context, the connection between the church and the holy of holies suggests a more concrete liturgical setting which parallels that which took place in the old Temple. Though not absolute, the text does evoke the language and imagery of the church as a worship "space" or "place." That is, even if the *ecclesia* here is not portrayed explicitly in spatial terms, the following link between *ecclesia* and ministration "in the holy of holies" clearly implies a spatial understanding of worship and the bishop-priest's role.

Each of these passages begins to signify, albeit briefly and quietly, an interest in physical space. Combined with other texts in the AT, the cumulative force suggests that space and place are in fact important conceptions for the Christian community in Rome. For example, AT 39 and 41 both speak to this notion of "place" for the worshipping community. AT 39 specifies that "the deacons and the presbyters gather daily in the place (*epma/in locum*) which the bishop appoints to them."[63] Likewise, AT 41 instructs that upon

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62 The Latin of this text breaks off after "to present" and the remaining prayer is supplemented by the Ethiopic version and the *Testamentum Domini*.

63 AT 39, *SC* 11bis: 122; also Botte, *Essai de reconstitution* (1989), 86. There is a lacuna in the Latin text at this point, and Botte's version is a Latin translation of the Coptic (Sahidic), and corroborated by the Arabic and Ethiopic. Where possible, I have tried to supply both the Coptic vocabulary (in this case *epma*) and Botte's Latin translation (*in locum*) to give the most complete sense of the underlying texts. The Coptic text can be found in *Der*

rising in the morning every believer should go hear teaching in the Word if it occurs, for

> he who prays in the church (*tekklēsia/in ecclesia*) will be able to escape the evil of the day. He who fears God thinks that it is a great evil if he does not hasten to the place (*epma/ad locum*) where there is instruction… Let none of you be late in the church (*etekklēsia/in ecclesia*), the place (*pma/locus*) where there is teaching…. The things you ought to do in your own home, you will also be told in that place (*pma/in illo loco*). Therefore, let everyone be careful to go to the church (*etekklēsia/ad ecclesiam*), the place (*pma/locum*) where the Holy Spirit abounds."[64]

From these instructions, one can see again the importance of "place" and "space" for this early Christian community. All of these instructions easily could be given in shortened form without spatial reference. Especially in the concluding remark, "the church" (*ecclesia)* is explicitly identified by the apposite, "the place" (*pma/locus*). If location and spatiality were of no concern, and if by "the church" the author meant merely the "spiritual" assembly of believers, the same instruction could stand easily without the spatial indicator: "let everyone be careful to go to the assembly where the Holy Spirit abounds." The addition of a locator, *pma/locus*, suggests that space and place were becoming an important communal notion identifying the church in the Roman Christian mind.[65] As Thomas Finn suggests, "the context of the AT presumes a building set aside for the community."[66] Though his is only a passing remark, Finn recognizes the implications of the way the AT speaks of and uses spatial language in its description of the church.

Finally, the AT testifies to the reality of property owned by the church. In chapter 40, commands are given for the care of the cemetery. No one, says the AT, should be charged for the services of burial, except for the price of the burial tiles. Rather, with money received from the church, the bishop should

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koptische Text der Kirchenordnung Hippolyts, ed. and trans. Walter Till and Johannes Leipoldt (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1954), chapter 60, p. 34.

64 AT 41, *SC* 11bis: 124; also Botte, *Essai de reconstitution* (1989), 88. Coptic text can be found in *Der koptische Text*, chapter 62, p. 36.

65 I grant that the Coptic (Sahidic) text is much later (perhaps originally translated c. AD 700; fully extant from 11th c.); nevertheless, because it is a translation from a Greek manuscript, the clear references to "space" and "place" obviously lie in the older Greek text behind the Coptic translation.

66 Thomas M. Finn, "Ritual Process and the Survival of Early Christianity: A study of the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus," *Journal of Ritual Studies* 3 (1989): 82, n.25.

provide for those "who are in that place (*pma*/*in loco illo*) and who care for it… so that there be no charge on those who come to that place (*eptopos*/*topos*)."[67] Again, the importance of space and place (*locum*/*topos*) emerges. Additionally, this space seems to be jointly owned by the church; in other words, here is evidence that this community owned property and hired someone to manage and care for it, and that, as the property belonging to the assembly, it was to be used by faithful members who passed away. Referring to this passage, Peter Lampe agrees that it witnesses to "one such common burial site occupied by Christians,"[68] another example of the importance of "Christian space" for this (Roman) community.

From these texts in the AT, one discovers a genuine sense of awareness that the church has its own public and fixed material culture, with its own property (cemeteries) and its own sacred space (the worship area of the assembly). Although the more explicit term *domus dei* (house of God) is not attested in the first two centuries,[69] there does seem to be a growing sense of the place of worship as a "sacred space" by the early third century and in the AT itself, along with the designation of the bishop as a priest. Given Leithart's conclusions about Old Testament priests as attendants of God's house, it is striking that the rise of sacerdotal designations for the Christian bishop and a growing sense of Christian space and place both emerge within the same text.

Textual Evidence Outside the AT

When looking beyond the AT itself, the literary evidence comports again with the suggestion that the early to mid-third century witnessed the emergence of a Christian material culture and spatial realities for worship. Eusebius of Caesarea, for example, notes in his *Church History* that Emperor Gallienus, in the year AD 260, issued an edict to end the former persecution of Christians, calling all heathens to "depart from the places of worship (*apo tōn topōn tōn*

67 AT 40, SC 11bis: 122; also Botte, *Essai de reconstitution* (1989), 86. The Coptic (*pma* and later *eptopos*) is found in *Der koptische Text*, chapter 61, p. 34. We also have a Greek fragment for this passage (containing the word *topos*), which again emphasizes the reality of spatial awareness in the underlying Greek (transliterated as *eptopos* by the Coptic).

68 "... ein solches gemeinschaftlich von Christen belegtes Grabareal." Peter Lampe, *Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten: Untersuchungen zur Sozialgeschichte* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1987), 106.

69 See Lampe, *stadtrömischen Christen,* 308. However, see my earlier chapter on Tertullian where he plays with the metaphor of the church building as the *templum Dei*.

thrēskeusimōn)."[70] It would seem from this decree that Christians not only possessed church buildings in some form by the mid third century, but that their property ownership was well established.

Minucius Felix (late second/early third century AD), like the AT, also points to this transition toward more permanent places of worship. On the one hand, in *Octavius* 10.2–4, the pagan Caecilius complains that Christians hide their worship and "have no altars (*nullas aras*), no sanctuaries (*nulla templa*),"[71] and Minucius seems to agree, saying Christians have "no temples (*delubra*) and altars (*aras*)."[72] Yet from the context his point is not that Christians have no worship space, but that they are not worshipping in the same way as pagans nor calling their space a "temple."[73] However, in another passage, Minucius records the objections to Christianity's "disgraceful chapels" (*sacraria*) and the questionable practices toward the Christian "priests" (*sacerdotes*).[74] Here is the first instance in which the place of Christian worship is designated in more concrete terms—as *sacraria*; interestingly, it occurs in the same context which speaks of Christian "priests" (*sacerdotes*). Thus, similar to the AT, these texts seem to mark a shift toward seeing Christian space as sacred and the one presiding over it as a priest.

Archaeological Evidence

Having now examined the textual evidence for an awareness of a distinctly public and fixed Christian material culture, I turn to the archaeological evidence to see whether the literary evidence concurs with the archaeological data in pointing toward this emerging awareness in early third century Rome. What archaeological evidence do we have of more permanent, fixed, places of worship in early third century Rome? Many scholars have suggested that the early third century Roman churches were nothing more than a loose scattering of gatherings. Allen Brent, for example, has contended that the Christian presence in Rome at this time consisted of a number of house churches built

70 Eusebius, *H.E* 7.13 (*SC* 41: 187).

71 Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 10.2–4 (Latin text in *Octavius*, ed. Bernhard Kytzler [Leipzig: Tübner Verlagsgesellschaft, 1982], 8).

72 *Octavius* 32.1 (Kytzler, 30).

73 See Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965), 5, for this point as well.

74 *Octavius* 9.1–4 (Kytzler, 7).

on the model of philosophical schools.[75] Indeed, given the "negative archaeological evidence," Brent concludes that "there are no examples of either separate church buildings, or indeed rooms in private houses, set aside exclusively for worship before the middle of the third century."[76] Later, Brent will reassert that "there were no separate chapels until the mid-third century when complexes specifically designed for worship and for burial were built on."[77] By Brent's conclusions, the Roman community surrounding the AT knew nothing of fixed places of worship designated for that sole purpose.

Likewise, Peter Lampe argues that only in the third century "does archaeology first bring to light residential houses in which rooms were reserved *exclusively* for divine worship."[78] Until the mid-third century, argues Lampe, no houses or rooms had such exclusive (*ausschliesslich*) usage as places of worship, and therefore the evidence for a fixed and permanent worship space for the church of the early third century is primarily *hypothetisch*.[79] There can be no objection, however, that the church eventually did begin to build just such church buildings for worship. The question remains, then, just how early did this process occur?

L. Michael White, building on the earlier work of Richard Krautheimer, has attempted to address the issue of "exactly when Christians first began to renovate houses or other private structures into church buildings"[80] solely for the purpose of Christian worship. He surveys the archaeological development of church structures from the earliest (and nearly invisible) form of the "house church" to the later fourth and fifth century basilicas. Between these two structural and chronological extremes, White contends that the *domus ecclesiae* stage represents the point at which Christian communities began to

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75 Brent, *Hippolytus and Roman Church*, 402–405. This is followed by Stewart-Sykes, *Hippolytus*, 38–39, 41.

76 Brent, *Hippolytus and Roman Church*, 404.

77 Brent, *Hippolytus and Roman Church,* 439.

78 "... hat die Archäologie Wohnhäuser ans Licht gefördert, in denen Räume *ausschliesslich* dem Gottesdienst vorbehalten waren." Lampe, *stadtrömischen Christen,* 307, italics his.

79 Lampe, *stadtrömischen Christen,* 307. Along similar lines, Robert Grant argues that there would have been theological objections "to temple-like buildings. The non-local God, who needed no sacrifices, could not be worshipped in a special sacred place and the church consisted of believers, not buildings" (Grant, "Temples, Churches, and Endowments," in *Early Christianity and Society*, ed. ibid (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977), 149.

80 L. Michael White, *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture*, vol. 1 (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1990), 117.

buy or use property for the sole purpose of worship. He essentially agrees with Krautheimer that between the years AD 150 and 250 the church continued to grow requiring new assembly places. During this period, some congregations began to own property and use buildings exclusively for worship.[81]

Broadly speaking, White argues that there is evidence for such a shift between AD 180–200 in which "there was an emergence of a more distinctively Christian material culture."[82] As the Christian population grew and the Eucharistic celebration became separate from the agape meal, the assembly places adjusted as well. White notes that one of the earliest attestations of this separation of the agape from the public Eucharistic celebration is found in the *Apostolic Tradition*.[83] Such liturgical shifts, argues White, "had a correlative impact on the arrangement and setting for assembly," leading to "the emergence of the hall arrangement for assembly."[84] As a result, White contends that by the third century, Christian buildings were becoming identifiable public Christian space, even if not architecturally unique.

The Syrian Church in Dura-Europos marks the best known example of such a public Christian "space," but what archaeological evidence is there for Rome?[85] Are Brent and others correct that no such fixed worship space existed for Roman Christians prior to the third century? Again taking cues from White's research, and adding to it the work done by Lampe, one can demonstrate that there is in fact good evidence that more permanent worship structures were beginning to arise in early third-century Rome as well. Thus, the literary observations about "space" and "place" in the AT point, in fact, to this architectural development in its time.

Peter Lampe delineates two possibilities of archaeological evidence for early third-century Roman Christian worship space, both of which are *tituli* churches of Rome. *Titulus Byzantis*, later known as the basilica SS Giovanni e Paolo, received major renovations sometime in the early to mid-third century.

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81 White, *Social Origins*, vol.1, 18–20, who follows Richard Krautheimer, *ECBA*, 3–12.

82 White, *Social Origins*, vol. 1, 118. See also Graydon Snyder, *Ante Pacem: Archaeological Evidence of Church Life before Constantine* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1985), 163–165.

83 AT 22 & 26–28. See White, *Social Origins*, vol. 1, 120.

84 White, *Social Origins*, vol. 1, 120.

85 Again, I have chosen to argue from the assumption that the AT is a Roman document, and thus will draw upon primarily Roman archaeological evidence. However, the archaeological evidence for early Christian worship space in third century *Syria* works well to substantiate this same thesis should one insist on placing the AT in the east rather than in Rome.

Krautheimer, Lampe and White all agree that from the evidence of the window groupings, the steps, and the reinforcement of the bottom wall, a great assembly hall was located here in the second and third stories, possibly used for Christian worship.[86] What began as a small Christian group meeting in a rear shop of the building soon renovated its space into a *domus ecclesiae*. That this architectural renovation was used as Christian assembly space is corroborated by the evidence of definitive Christian frescoes at the end of the third century.[87] Thus, *titulus Byzantis* was clearly a Christian *domus ecclesiae* by the second half of the third century, and quite possibly used as such from even earlier times.

Second, the *titulus Clementis* (now known as the basilica S Clemente) bears evidence to a building with a large open hall in the early house that could have been used as an assembly place.[88] Archaeological excavations have revealed that the original basilica framework of the late fourth century was built on structures of even earlier centuries. White notes that the buildings existing under the basilica "were renovated during the third century to serve as a large hall, and thus might well have housed a pre-Constantinian Christian community."[89] Though conclusive evidence is not available, Krautheimer argues that "the likelihood is undeniable" that Christian congregations used these buildings well before the construction of the basilica.[90] Likewise Matilda Webb argues that the Clementine church group likely existed already in this very building by the second century.[91] In fact, archaeological evidence suggests that the later basilica was formed and constrained by the pre-existing structure already used by Christians as worship space.[92]

There is a third possibility of evidence for a more permanent Christian worship space, that of the *titulus Equitii*, known now as the basilica S Martino ai Monti. Émile Mâle, in a monograph on the early churches in Rome, notes that the walls of this early structure are made of bricks resembling the period

86 See Krautheimer, *ECBA*, 9; Lampe, *stadtrömischen Christen,* 307; and White, *Social Origins*, vol. 1, 114.

87 Lampe, *stadtrömischen Christen,* 307–308. See also, L. Michael White, *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture*, vol. 2 (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1997), 216–217.

88 Lampe, *stadtrömischen Christen,* 308.

89 White, *Social Origins*, vol. 2, 219–222.

90 Krautheimer, *ECBA,* 9. So also White, *Social Origins*, vol. 2, 226–228.

91 Matilda Webb, *Churches and Catacombs of Early Christian Rome* (Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2001), 87.

92 White, *Social Origins*, vol. 2, 228.

of the early third century.[93] This early church appears to have been a house used for Christian assembly. Unlike the neighboring houses, however, after approaching through the vestibule, one entered a spacious hall, divided by pillars into two aisles, with room enough to hold a large gathering. The archaeological excavation suggests that the hall had been planned intentionally for a large assembly when the house was first built.[94] Certainly one of the worship places of Christians during the middle third century, it also appears to have existed for Christian use from an even earlier date.

Taking our starting point from Lampe's conclusion that there were no rooms or homes permanently set apart for Christian worship in the first two centuries,[95] and that there is solid evidence that such worship space did exist by the middle to late third century, it is not unlikely that such a transition from pure house church to building renovation for exclusive worship was a gradual one from the early to the mid-third century. Thus, the AT resides precisely in the midst of this transition and emergence of "sacred space" for the Christian community. Would it be too bold to press the conservative conclusions of Krautheimer, White and Lampe to suggest that perhaps what the AT is witnessing to in its identification of "space" and "place" is in fact the slow but formidable emergence of the more permanent Christian worship space, even before definitive archaeological verification can bear witness? In fact, some scholars such as James Jeffers and Johann Kirsch have already argued that the archaeological evidence does suggest extensive renovation to the early *tituli* buildings by the early third century.[96] Even if not conclusive, the evidence is certainly highly suggestive of Christian worship space in the early third century.

More definitive evidence of a growing Christian spatial culture comes from the Roman catacombs. As already noted above, the AT testifies to the existence of church property in the form of burial sites for poor believers. Archaeologically, this literary evidence is corroborated. Krautheimer remarks that the construction of large communal burial sites, especially underground,

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93 Émile Mâle, *Rome et ses vieilles églises* (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1992), 47.

94 Mâle, *Rome,* 48. Even Lampe admits this could be a permanent house church of the third century (*stadtrömischen Christen,* 308).

95 Lampe, *stadtrömischen Christen,* 309.

96 James Jeffers, *Conflict at Rome: Social Order and Hierarchy in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 45, and J.P. Kirsch, *Die römischen Titelkirchen im Altertum* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1918), 134, both argue that the renovations and modifications of the *tituli* churches occurred as early as the late second or early third century. See also J.P. Kirsch, *Die christlichen Cultusgebäude im Altertum* (Köln: J.P. Bachem, 1893).

was the perfect solution for the poorer Christian believers who individually could not afford their own sites. This began, says Krautheimer, in "the last quarter of the second century and the early third centuries,"[97] precisely the period in which the AT resides.

While Brent and Lampe suggest that communally-owned Christian catacombs arose only in the mid-third century,[98] the evidence suggests that an exclusive Christian burial place existed as early as the time of Victor (AD 186–196). Vincenzo Nicolai et al., in their work on the Christian Roman catacombs, argue that "the literary and monumental evidence agree in placing the first appearance of collective and exclusive funerary area for Christian communities" in the end of the second century.[99] Certainly, as the *Refutation of All Heresies* 9 records, common Christian burial spots existed by the early third century when, for example, Zephyrinus (AD 195–217) assigned young Callistus as custodian and caretaker of the Christian cemetery. Examination of this catacomb, known now as the catacomb of Callistus, demonstrates that its construction was designed from the very beginning as a communal burial ground for larger numbers of people.[100] Throughout the third and into the fourth century, this and other common burial places were enlarged and expanded to accommodate a continually growing Christian population. Indeed, one of the distinctive features of Christian catacombs was their intentional construction from the very beginning with a view towards eventual expansion, compared to the more "closed" structure of the pagan sites.[101]

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97 Krautheimer, *ECBA*, 9

98 See Brent, *Hippolytus and Roman Church*, 437–440; and Lampe, *stadtrömischen Christen*, 310–311. Brent especially seems to dismiss both the account of Victor's designating Callistus as custodian of "the cemetery" (*Refutation* 9.12.14), and the evidence of AT itself which seems to speak very clearly of a Christian burial place, owned by all.

99 See Vincenzo Fiocchi Nicolai et al., *The Christian Catacombs of Rome: History, decoration, inscriptions*, trans. Cristina Carlo Stella and Lori-Ann Touchette, 2nd ed. (Regensburg: Schnell & Steiner, 2009), 13, 14. Nicolai notes that Tertullian also speaks of Christian burial places in N. Africa as early as 197 (see Tertullian, *Apolog.* 39.5–6; and *Ad Scap.* 3.1). Likewise, Origen of Alexandria mentions collective burial places by the early third century (Origen, *Hom. Jer.* IV.3.16). George La Piana agrees with these conclusions stating: "stronger arguments may be brought in favor of the theory that the acquisition of the new property in the name of the church took place in the episcopate of Victor ("The Roman Church at the End of the Second Century," *Harvard Theological Review* 18 [1925]: 256).

100 L.V. Rutgers, *Subterranean Rome: In Search of the Roots of Christianity in the Catacombs of the Eternal City* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 67.

101 Nicolai, *Catacombs*, 16–17. The Catacomb of Callistus is a prime example given here.

Thomas Harrington, in an examination of the "common cemetery" in the late second century, traces the stages of cemetery development, showing that what were formerly privately owned burial sites in the mid-second century, became more corporately owned by the end of the second and into the third century.[102] This shift, says Harrington, demonstrates "a dramatic new development in ecclesiastical administration, for it marks the first documented instance of ecclesial exercise of custody and control over real ('immovable') property which can be described as 'belonging' to the community at large."[103] Harrington argues that in Rome, where burial of the dead was weighted with great importance, the significance of such property would have been immense for Christians.[104] In other words, Harrington's research suggest that these burial grounds would be viewed as Christian "sacred space" and significant evidence of an emerging visible, spatial Christian culture in Rome at the beginning of the third century.

These burial sites were not merely abandoned places to store the bodies of dead believers. They were invested with "sacredness" as they housed the bodies of Christian saints and martyrs. The church cared for these sites, constructed intentional rooms for them, placed inscriptions on the walls indicating the holy ones buried there, returned to them for worship and memorial services, and created extensive works of art to decorate the rooms.[105] Some of the earliest pieces of extant Christian art are those from the catacombs.

Thus, this evidence presents a clear context in which Christian leaders, the bishops, are responsible for the care and administration of material property. Even if Christians were not worshipping regularly in the catacombs, they still represented "sacred space" for the Christian community. As Nicolai suggests, one of the reasons for the rise of exclusively Christian burial grounds was "the desire to set out proper spaces for the celebration of burial rites, in part distinctive such as the prayer for the dead, the funerary Mass, etc."[106] They, along with the developing notions of more fixed worship spaces in the early to mid-third century, form the initial stages of a Christian spatial culture

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102 Thomas J. Harrington, "The Local Church at Rome in the Second Century: A Common Cemetery Emerges in this 'Laboratory of Christian Policy,'" *Studia Canonica* 23.1 (1989): 167–188. See also Jeffers, *Conflict at Rome*, 49.

103 Harrington, "Church at Rome,"180–181.

104 Harrington, "Church at Rome," 186.

105 For the idea of the catacombs retaining a sense of holiness, see Rutgers, *Subterranean Rome*, 75.

106 Nicolai, *Catacombs*, 15. See, e.g. *Martyrdom of Polycarp* 18–28 for examples of Christians returning to burial sites for services.

over which the bishop must preside and to which he must attend. Thus, for the first time in Rome there is the creation of a sacred space that requires the care of an appointed caretaker, naturally the bishop.

Given the combination of literary and archaeological evidence examined above, there is good reason to believe that the early-third century in Rome represents a time of transition toward more permanent places for Christian worship and burial. Particularly in light of the literary findings in the AT regarding the awareness of and sensitivity toward "space" and "place," the conclusion seems quite plausible that Christians in Rome did have exclusive worship space by the early third century, and that this spatial awareness played a large and important role in shaping early Christian understanding of the bishop as a priest of the people of God, his sanctuary the church, and his holy things.

Conclusion

A public and fixed Christian spatial culture is forming in Rome at the end of the second or beginning of the third century. In particular, catacombs and worship spaces (houses designated as more permanent places of worship) are becoming more visible, concrete realities among Christian communities in Rome. In light of this evidence, the textual witness to an interest in "place" and "space" seen in the AT now begins to take shape as something definite in the Christian community. There was a newly emerging consciousness of a Christian spatial culture, one especially aware of sacred "space" and "place" in which Christians lived, moved, worshipped, and even were buried. This forms an ideal backdrop for the emergence of the bishop as a priest at precisely the same time. Combining these observations about the emerging Christian spatial awareness with the earlier observations about a solidifying religio-political ecclesiology in continuity with ancient Israel, the appropriate catalysts are now in place to move early Christians to reflect on their ministerial leader as a "priest." The old covenant attendants of God's house are fulfilled now by the church's new priestly attendants, the bishops. Indeed, from the *Apostolic Tradition* itself, Willy Rordorf observes these influences, what he calls

> a temporal aspect and a spatial aspect. On the one hand, [the AT] signifies the *oikonomia* of the history of salvation [from Abraham to the Church]… on the other hand, the conception of *ordo* is spatial: the 'race of the just' forms the Church, the

> 'sanctuary' of God which is installed 'in every place', and which recognizes, in its bosom, a hierarchy of ministers.[107]

Rordorf's observations on the AT comport very well with my own observations about this affirmation of continuity with ancient Israel (the religio-political ecclesiology) and the emergence of a Christian material culture (the spatial awareness). Priesthood, then, seems to develop in this dual context as the bishop, the new priest of the fulfilled Israel, presides over worship and liturgy in the newly developing sacred spaces of Christian worship halls and burial grounds.

Thus, the prevailing hypothesis for explaining a Christian priesthood in connection with the Eucharistic sacrifice fails to do justice to the details of the text of the AT and the archaeological evidence of third-century Rome. By considering the text more closely, one can conclude with great confidence that a solidifying Christian religio-political ecclesiology, combined with a growing awareness of sacred space, plays an integral role in the development of designating the Christian bishop as a priest in the AT.

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107 "… un aspect temporal et un aspect spatial. D'une part, il signifie l'*oikonomia* de l'histoire du salut [from Abraham to church]... D'autre part, la conception de l'*ordo* est spatiale : la « race des justes » forme l'Église, le « sanctuaire » de Dieu qui s'installe « en tout lieu », et qui connaît, en son sein, une hiérarchie des ministères." Willy Rordorf, "L'ordination de l'évêque selon la tradition apostolique d'Hippolyte de Rom," *Questions Liturgiques* 55 (1974), 148.

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STEWARDS OF GOD'S HOUSE

The Didascalia Apostolorum

The previous chapter explored the development of priestly designations for the bishop in the western church order, the *Apostolic Tradition*. This chapter turns now to the east, with an examination the *Didascalia Apostolorum*, for another early witness to the rise of a sacerdotal understanding of the episcopal office. The importance of the *Didascalia Apostolorum* (*DA*) lies in its portrayal of early Christian life in the third century east, what Bartlett describes as "the most living and detailed picture we possess of Church-life in that century,"[1] and what Plöchl calls "a complete summary of the church order prevailing in the third century."[2] For our purposes, the real value of this text lies in its portrayal of the Christian bishop in clear priestly terms, making it, along with the *Apostolic Tradition*, one of the earliest evidences of such a designation within Christianity. By exploring the presentation of the bishop in the *DA*, specifically in its use of sacerdotal designations, we can gain further insight into the understanding of this portrayal and possible causal factors behind it.

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1 James Bartlett, *Church-Life and Church-Order during the First Four Centuries*, ed. C.J. Cadoux (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1943), 75.

2 "... eine ziemlich vollständige Zusammenfassung des im 3. Jahrhundert geltenden Kirchenrechts." Willibald Plöchl, *Geschichte des Kirchenrechts*, vol. 1 (Wien: Verlag Herold, 1960), 108.

Background to the Didascalia Apostolorum

Dating and Provenance

Nearly all scholars agree that the *DA* was written sometime in the third century in the provenance of Syria or northern Palestine. Debate centers around which half of the third century is the most likely period of production.[3] Scholars such as Plöchl, Achelis and Schwartz suggest the second half of the third century. On the other hand, scholars such as Bartlett, Brakke, Galtier, and Connolly argue for the first half of the same century. More recently, however, Alistair Stewart-Sykes has argued for "redactional layers" within the DA, with the result that he attributes the origin of some material within the DA as quite early (even into the first century), while dating the final unifying redaction of the material much later. Identifying the various layers of material, Stewart-Sykes dates the final period of redaction to the late-third or early-fourth century, while also allowing that some of the material contained in the DA reflects earlier sources.[4] While Stewart-Sykes' caution against seeing the DA as a single text produced by a single author is a legitimate issue, for our purposes the precise dating of the DA is not a concern. I will follow

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3 See Plöchl, *Kirchenrechts*, 108; Bartlett, *Church-Life*, 89; Hans Achelis and Johannes Flemming, *Die ältesten Quellen des orientalischen Kirchenrechts: Die syrische Didaskalia* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1904), 377 (although leaning towards the latter half of the century, Achelis prefers to leave the issue a *non liquet* (not proven); Eduard Schwartz, *Bussstufen und Katechumenatsklassen* (Strassburg: K.J. Trübner, 1911), 23; David Brakke, "The Problematization of Nocturnal Emissions in Early Christian Syria, Egypt, and Gaul," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3 (1995): 424; Paul Galtier, "La Date de la Didascalie des apôtres," *Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique* 42 (1947): 337–350; and R.H. Connolly, *Didascalia Apostolorum* (London: Oxford U.P., 1970), lxxxvii & xc. Galtier summarizes nicely the main issues for each side: those who date the *DA* late typically find it to be a reaction to the Novatian schism and demonstrating a later, "lax" attitude toward the penitential system. Those who hold to an earlier date typically argue that a so-called "lax" attitude as found in the *DA* can also be found in earlier writers like Hippolytus, Callistus and even Cyprian to some extent. Connolly also makes the literary observation that the *DA* shows no dependence on any other writings beyond Irenaeus, which suggests that it was written in the early third century rather than later (Connolly, *Didascalia*, xc).

4 Stewart-Sykes, *Didascalia Apostolorum: An English Version with Introduction and Annotation*, Studia Traditionis Theologiae: Explorations in Early and Medieval Theology 1 (Turnhout Brepols, 2009), 49–55.

the general scholarly consensus that the DA was a text whose final form was reached sometime in the third century.[5]

Textual Issues

Originally written in Greek, the *DA* comes to us in a complete form only in a Syriac translation.[6] In addition to the Syriac, there also exist considerable Latin fragments of the text[7] and a revised and expanded Greek version available in the fourth century *Apostolic Constitutions*.[8] As Connolly notes, the Latin text dates to the fifth century (perhaps earlier), is "studiously literal," and can "provide us with a valuable standard by which to measure the more free and literary Syriac version."[9] In other words, where available, the Latin text can be relied upon as a faithful witness to the underlying Greek text and may in fact be a more accurate translation than the Syriac which requires more

5 In particular, however, the chapters that speak most explicitly about the episcopal office, and contain clear priestly designations (chapters 8 and 9), Stewart-Sykes cogently dates to the early-third century. These chapters speak of congregational support of the bishops and deacons, "a situation which became regular and normal in the earlier part of the third century" (Stewart-Sykes, *Didascalia*, 50). Thus it is quite likely that the material under consideration here finds its origins in the first half of the third century rather than the latter half.

6 The critical Syriac edition is Arthur Vööbus, *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, vols. 401 & 407 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1979). English translations are provided by the author in the same series, CSCO 402 & 408. The Syriac version dates to the 8th or 9th century.

7 The critical Latin texts for the Didascalia can be found in Édmund Hauler, *Didascaliae Apostolorum Fragmenta Ueronensia Latina: Accedunt Canonum Qui Dicuntur Apostolorum et Aegyptiorum Reliquies* (Lipsiae: Teubneri, 1900); F.X. Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum* (Torino: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1961); and Erik Tidner, *Didascaliae Apostolorum, Canonum Ecclesiasticorum, Traditionis Apostolicae Versiones Latinae* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1963).
English translations can be found in Vööbus, Connolly, and Stewart-Sykes (see above). A French translation was produced by François Nau, *La didascalie des douze apôtres: traduite du syriaque pour la première fois*, 2nd ed. (Paris: P. Lethielleux, 1912); and a German translation was provided by Achelis and Flemming (see notes above).

8 The critical edition can be found in *Les constitutions apostoliques*, ed. Marcel Metzger, 2 vols., Sources chrétiennes 320 & 329 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1985–1986).

9 Connolly, *Didascalia*, xix–xx.

idiomatic translation from the Greek.[10] The Greek *Apostolic Constitutions*, on the other hand, demonstrates a strong revisionist hand, sometimes staying close to the original text and at other times greatly expanding and developing it. While one must be cautious about using the *Apostolic Constitutions* to arrive at the original Greek, there can be great value to this text, particularly when it is in agreement with the Latin or Syriac versions, or both. As Vööbus suggests, "the amount of the original Greek text preserved in the *Apostolic Constitutions* must be reckoned as considerable."[11] Therefore, when the Greek of the *Apostolic Constitutions* shows clear agreement with the Syriac or Latin texts, it will be cited as original. Likewise, if the Latin version is available, that translation may also be employed. If a certain text remains faithful only in the Syriac version I will use Stewart-Sykes' new English translation and cite the Syriac critical edition for reference.

Genre

The genre of the *DA* is quite different from that of the *Apostolic Tradition*. Whereas the *AT* provided ample instructions for episcopal ordination, worship services, and institutional life, in many respects the *DA* does not look like a church order at all. As R.H. Connolly notes, the *DA* "is much more an elementary treatise on Pastoral Theology"[12] than a church order proper. Georg Schöllgen likewise argues that the title "Kirchenordnung" may not be the best designation for this text. Rather, Schöllgen observes that the *DA* covers the themes of traditional church orders (liturgy, power, catecheses and so on) in only the most general terms. He also rightly notes that the last section of the *DA* is not a church order in any sense, but a theological writing against schismatics and heretics. In the end, Schöllgen wishes to categorize the *DA* in much broader terms, concluding, "It is rather a pastoral writing of admonition and teaching addressed to a few actual and latent problems and misunderstandings of the community."[13]

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10 See Achelis, *Didaskalia*, 250 for similar assessment of the Latin. Vööbus argues that the Latin is earlier than the Syriac and more literal (*CSCO* 402: 25–28).

11 Vööbus, *CSCO* 408: 32.

12 Connolly, *Didascalia,* xxvii.

13 "Sie ist vielmehr eine pastorale Mahn- und Lehrschrift zu einzelnen aktuellen und latenten Problemen und Mißständen der Gemeinden des 3. Jh. im apostolischen Gewand." Georg Schöllgen, "Die literarische Gattung der syrischen Didaskalie" in *IV Symposium Syriacum,*

As a result of its unique genre, ordination instructions and prayers will play little role in this chapter; instead the focus will be on the portrayal of the bishop in the *DA*'s presentation of community life, images of authority, worship regulations, and Christian interpretation of Jewish law. Several chapters address the episcopal office explicitly, and these will be mined carefully for the community's understanding of the bishop as a priest.

Priestly Depictions of the Christian Bishop

In chapters 8 and 9 of the *DA*, instructions are given to the clergy and the laity regarding the proper conduct of and respect due to the bishop. From these chapters, one gains a fairly clear picture of the bishop's roles and responsibilities as well as his authority within the Christian community. The biblical priesthood clearly lies as an important influence on this presentation of the bishop; yet, it must be admitted that the priestly metaphor is not the only one used. The author demonstrates his comprehensive biblical influence when he admonishes the bishops:

> Therefore today, you O bishops, are to your people priests and Levites, those who serve in the holy tabernacle, the holy catholic church, who stand before the altar of the Lord your God… You are prophets to the laity among you—rulers, leaders, kings, mediators between God and his faithful ones, receivers and messengers of the word, and those who know the Scriptures, the voice of God and witnesses of his will…[14]

In this one passage alone, the *DA* portrays the bishop as priest, prophet, leader, king, mediator, preacher and student of the Word. Several scholars have attempted to address this multitude of episcopal metaphors by narrowing the field to one major, dominant presentation. Gorg Schöllgen, for example, argues that the predominant image of the bishop in the *DA* is that of the

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1984, ed. H.J.W. Drijvers (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1987), 159. See also W.C. van Unnick who argues a very similar line as Schöllgen ("The Significance of Moses' Law for the Church of Christ According to the Syriac Didascalia," in *Sparsa Collecta: The Collected Essays of W.C. Van Unnick*, eds. Cilliers Breytenbach and Pieter Willem van der Hort, vol. 3 [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983], 10–11); and Stewart-Sykes, *Didascalia*, 3–5.

14 *Didascalia* 8; Greek: *AC* 2.25.7, *SC* 320: 230. All translations from the Greek and Latin are my own unless stated otherwise. Syriac translations are those of Stewart-Sykes and will be indicated as such.

oikonomos, the household ruler.[15] Karen Torjesen has suggested that the *DA's* episcopacy is primarily one of a monarchial metaphor, the bishop as king, ruler and judge.[16] Both Schöllgen and Torjesen, however, suggest that the priestly metaphor plays little to no role at all.[17]

It is not the goal of this chapter to provide a comprehensive examination of all the metaphors used to describe the bishop. That the episcopal office is cast in light of a monarchial, prophetical, and household-leadership model cannot be denied. Neither is it suggested that the priestly metaphor is necessarily the primary one. However, *pace* Schöllgen and Torjesen, the sacerdotal imagery does play a larger and more important role than has been suggested in the past,[18] and it will be the task of this chapter to explore that portrayal in more detail.

As mentioned, chapters 8 and 9 deal with the episcopal office in the greatest detail, and the priestly imagery is quite explicit here; however, there are other passages which equally portray the bishop in sacerdotal terms. One discovers this depiction throughout the work in an almost assumed fashion. In other words, the text of the *DA* argues for the continued support and respect of the bishop because of the perspective shared with his audience that the Old Testament model of priesthood corresponds to the Christian bishop.

For example, in discussing the proper conduct of a bishop, the text admonishes: "Therefore let it be examined whether [the bishop] is blameless (*amōmos*) concerning worldly matters; for it is written 'Search for the faults of the one who is about to be ordained into the priesthood (*eis hierōsunēn*).'"[19] The citation comes from the commands found in Leviticus 21:17–23 in which Aaron is instructed that no one found with a blemish (*mōmos*) can perform the functions of the priesthood.[20]

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15 Georg Schöllgen, *Die Anfänge der Professionalisierung des Klerus und das kirchliche Amt in der syrischen Didaskalie*, Jahrbuch für Antike und Chrsistentum 26 (Münster: Aschendorf, 1998), esp. 106–120 & 127–134.

16 Karen Torjesen, "The Episcopacy—Sacerdotal or Monarchical? The Appeal to Old Testament Institutions by Cyprian and the Didascalia," *Studia Patristica* 36 (2001): 387–406.

17 See Schöllgen, *Die Anfänge*, 104–105; and Torjesen, "Episcopacy," 388, who actually relies on Schöllgen's assessment for her conclusion.

18 See also Stewart-Sykes, *Didascalia*, 68, for similar discussion and conclusion.

19 *Didascalia* 4; Greek: *AC* 2.3, *SC* 320: 148.

20 The important difference of course is that the Old Testament law refers to physical blemish and the DA intends moral failure. In other words, the appropriation of the Levitical law is not literal, but analogical.

The *DA* later admonishes the people to respect and imitate their blameless bishop: "For if the pastor is blameless in regard to any wickedness, he will compel his own disciples, even through his very way of life, to urge them to become imitators of his own deeds. As the prophet says somewhere, 'Just as the priest (*hiereus*) will be, so also will be the people' (Hos. 4:9)."[21] Again, the underlying assumption is that the biblical priesthood corresponds to the Christian episcopacy such that Old Testament texts speaking of priesthood can be applied analogically to the episcopal office without qualification.

This connection between the authority of biblical priesthood and Christian bishops is made even more deliberate in the text's attempts to highlight the centrality of the bishop to communal life. Reminiscent of the letters of Ignatius of Antioch, the author of the *DA* urges the community to "do nothing without the bishop."[22] Unlike Ignatius, however, the *DA* grounds this command explicitly in the correlation between the bishop and Israelite priests: "Therefore just as it was not lawful for him who was not a Levite to offer anything or to approach the altar without a priest (*sacerdote/hiereōs*), so also you should not desire to do anything without the bishop (*episcopo/episkopou*)."[23] Here the parallel between Levitical priesthood and Christian bishop stands pronounced, and the centrality of the bishop's presence and authority lies precisely in this connection. Just as the Israelite nation approached God via the priesthood, so too the Christian community must operate around the priestly *episkopos*.

Given these examples of the underlying connection between biblical priesthood and Christian episcopacy, it should come as no surprise that the author elsewhere explicitly makes clear this metaphoric connection. In ancient times, says the *DA*, offerings were given through the priests,

> but today, there are offerings (*prosforae/prosphorai*) which are given to God for the remission of sins through the bishops (*per episcopos/dia tōn episkopōn*). For they are your high priests (*primi sacerdotes/archiereis*); but your priests are the presbyters and your Levites are your deacons…"[24]

Here one sees not only the identification of the bishops as high priests, but also the further connection between priests/presbyters and Levites/deacons so

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21 *Didascalia* 4; Greek: *AC* 2.6, *SC* 320: 156.

22 *Didascalia* 9; Greek: *AC* 2.27, *SC* 320: 240–42; See Letters of Ignatius of Antioch, *To Magnesians* 7; *To Tralians*. 2; *To Polycarp* 4.

23 *Didascalia* 9; Latin: *DA* XXVI, in Tidner, 42; Greek: *AC* 2.27, *SC* 320: 240.

24 *Didascalia* 9; Latin: *DA* XXV, in Tidner, 41; Greek: *AC* 2.26, *SC* 320: 236.

that the entire body of clergy are associated with the priestly paradigm found in the Old Testament.

These texts demonstrate that the priestly metaphor held an important place for the *Didascalia*, even if not the sole metaphor employed. Although the *DA* uses a variety of images and metaphors to speak of the bishop (priest, king, prophet, leader, ruler, mediator) the image of priest finds consistent repetition throughout the work and often finds primacy of place when a series of metaphors is given.[25] The idea of the bishop as a priest seems well established and accepted within this early Christian community and repeatedly pervades the presentation of the bishop's role and place in the congregation.

Moreover, in each of the above texts, the priestly metaphor clearly derives from the biblical priestly model. The former Israelite priesthood corresponds to the current Christian office of bishop. As Collin Bulley concludes, "The main connotations of the bishop's priesthood are holiness, sacral authority and centrality to the church's life, reception, distribution and partaking of the people's offerings… The OT priesthood is seen as the priestly pattern for bishops to follow."[26] This is significant because it dispels any notion that this early Christian community derived its idea of priesthood from the pagan world around it. At every point, when designated as a priesthood, the Christian episcopacy is likened to the Israelite priesthood, not a pagan one.

This leads to another important observation about the *DA*'s portrayal of the bishop-priest: it is the biblical text that fundamentally influences the apparent theology of hierarchy and community life. As P. Beaucamp notes, the *DA* "cites it [the biblical text] without ceasing and with marvelous relevance, having for each question a biblical text to make the most of, for each objection a response drawn from the holy books. Once again, Scripture forms the foundation of his discourse."[27] Whether using the New Testament Pastoral Epistles or the Old Testament Levitical laws,[28] the *Didascalia* imbues its

25 See for example the passage in chapter 8, given above: "You are priests and prophets and rulers and kings…" The priestly metaphor is placed at the forefront of the list.

26 Collin Bulley, *The Priesthood of Some Believers: Developments from the General to the Special Priesthood in the Christian Literature of the First Three Centuries* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2000), 130.

27 "Il la cite sans cesse et avec un merveilleux à propos, ayant pour chaque question un text bibliqie à faire valoir, pour chaque objection une réponse tirée des livres saints. L'Ecriture forme encore le fond de son discours…" Pierre Beaucamp, "Un évêque du IIIe siècle aux prises avec les pécheurs," *Bulletin de littérature ecclésiastique* 50 (1949): 28.

28 See Achelis, *Didaskalia*, 272, who notes this connection.

address with biblical-theological reasoning and support. This is no less true in his depiction of the bishop in priestly terms. The model of the Old Testament stands as the background for his depiction and understanding of the episcopal office.

A number of other tasks and functions attributed to the bishop in the *Didascalia* highlight both the influence of Scripture on this community as well as the pervasive application of priestly images. Many of these tasks, such as preaching, judging, and ruling seem to draw upon other Old Testament models of authority such as the prophet or king. Given the *DA*'s full dependence upon Scripture, this certainly must be the case; yet, many of these functions can also be connected to priestly tasks in the Old Testament. Menahem Haran, for instance, has demonstrated that episcopal tasks in the *DA* such as "delivering the divine will," acting as "physician," "teaching," and "acting as judge" all have their priestly correlates in the Old Testament.[29] For example, Haran notes that the priest holds the oracular function of dispensing God's will.[30] As the one who guarded ritual purity and declared persons clean and unclean, the priest is cast in the mold of a physician (cp. *DA* 7). Likewise, the task of instructing the people in torah belongs to the priest in the Old Testament.[31]

Following upon the argument from last chapter, one particularly noteworthy description of the Old Testament priest is that of being an "attendant of the Lord" or a "sanctuary attendant." Peter Leithart, Aelred Cody, Leopold Sabourin and Haran have all argued that one of the chief roles of the Israelite priests was in their capacity to act as an attendant who "stands before the Lord to serve."[32] This links particularly well to certain descriptions of the bishop in the *DA* as the "steward of God" (*dispensator Dei*),[33] the

29 Menahem Haran, "Priesthood, Temple, Divine Service: Some Observations on Institutions and Practices of Worship," *Hebrew Annual Review* 7 (1983): 122.

30 See 1 Samuel 2:28; 14:18ff, 36–42; 28:6; and 30:7 (cp. *DA* 8).

31 Deuteronomy 17:8–13; 21:5; and 33:10; 2 Chronicles 15:3; Hosea 4:6; Micah 3:11; 2 Kings 12:2; 17:27–28; Jeremiah 2:8; Ezekiel 7:26; 44:23; and Ezra 7:10 (see *DA* 2; 5; 7).

32 See Peter Leithart, "Attendants of Yahweh's House: Priesthood in the Old Testament" *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 85 (1999): 3–24; Aelred Cody, *A History of Old Testament Priesthood* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1969), 29, 101; and Leopold Sabourin, *Priesthood: A Comparative Study* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 150–157. For this task of guardianship of tabernacle and sacred things, see Numb. 1:53; 3:23–38; 4:48; Deut. 10:8; 17:12; 18:5,7; Ezek. 40:46; 43:19; 44:15.

33 *Didascalia* 8; Latin: *DA* XXIV, in Tidner, 40; and *Didascalia* 9; Latin: *DA* XXVI, in Tidner, 43.

one who is "to attend to the house" (*ministrare domum*),[34] as those who "serve the tabernacle" (*hoi leitourgountes tē hiera skēnē*),[35] and as those who "stand before the Lord your God" (*parestōtes kyriō theō*).[36] Again, the *Didascalia* explicitly draws upon the priestly image through these descriptions, calling for a reassessment of the scholarship that has downplayed the sacerdotal imagery in the *DA*. Certainly, the episcopal tasks evoke a multiplicity of biblical models of authority, but the evocations of a biblical priesthood are much stronger than many have admitted. The bishops and their roles in the *Didascalia* correspond to the priests of Israel in these ways, both terminologically and conceptually.

Having briefly demonstrated that the *DA* does in fact portray the bishop with priestly images and analogues, the question of influence remains. What were the driving forces behind this designation? What clues within the text itself provide further insight into this developing notion of the bishop as a "Christian priest?"

Eucharistic Sacrifice?

As explained in earlier chapters, a common explanation given for the rise of priestly designations has to do with the bishop's connection with offering the Eucharistic sacrifice. Does the *DA* support this idea? At first glance, there are a few texts that seem to suggest a connection between the bishop-priest idea and the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Chapter 9 begins with a comparison between the old people of God and the Christian church, quickly moving to a comparison regarding sacrifice. The author instructs: "The sacrifices which existed formerly are now prayers and petitions and acts of thanksgiving; formerly there were first-fruits and tithes and portions and gifts, but now there are offerings which are made to God for the remission of sins through the bishop. For they are your high priests."[37] Here it appears that part of the responsibility of the bishop, *qua* high-priest, is to make the offerings of the worshipping community. Certainly, as president

34 *Didascalia* 9; Latin: *DA* XXVII, in Tidner, 44.

35 *Didascalia* 8; Greek: *AC* 2.25.7, *SC* 320: 230.

36 *Didascalia* 8; Greek: *AC* 2.25.7, *SC* 320: 230.

37 *Didascalia* 9; Latin: *DA* XXV, in Tidner, 41; Greek: *AC* 2.26, *SC* 320: 236, though in a slightly different form.

of worship, this is one of the bishop's primary tasks. Yet, nothing in this passage explicitly speaks of the Eucharistic offering. Instead, the Christian sacrifices are specifically named "prayers and petitions and acts of thanksgiving."[38] Though the Eucharist certainly would have been seen as sacrificial in nature (a virtually unanimous early Christian perspective),[39] it does not seem to be the foremost "sacrifice" in connection with the bishop's designation as "high priest" in the *DA*.

Another passage in the same chapter also speaks of the bishop as priest in the context of sacrifice by making the comparison between liturgical ministry in Israel and in the church: "Therefore just as it was not lawful for him who was not a Levite to make any offering or to approach the altar (*altarem*/*thysiastērion*) without a priest, so also you should not desire to do anything without the bishop."[40] Again, the priestly metaphor works along the lines of sacrificial, liturgical duties of Levites and Christian bishops. Yet, while the Eucharistic service may be in the purview of the author, it is clearly not the foundational idea. The immediately preceding context helps us see what the "altar" is: as the bishop stands in the place of God and the deacons in the place of Christ, "the widows and orphans should be understood by you as the type of the altar (*in typum altaris*/*typon tou thysiastēriou*)."[41] A few lines later, the author commands: "Therefore, make your offerings (*prosforas*/*tas thysias*) to your bishop, either you yourselves or through the deacons; and when he receives from each, he will divide to each as he should. For the bishop knows well

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38 The *AC*, in comparison with the Latin, omits the word "acts" (*actiones*) and speaks only of "thanksgivings" (*eucharistiai*). This may be taken to refer to the Eucharist; however, it is debatable whether this was the original wording of the *Didascalia*. Van Unnick also sees this passage as speaking of prayers rather than the Eucharist ("Moses' Law," 22).

39 For an overview of the early church's view of the Eucharist as sacrifice, see Robert Daly, *Christian Sacrifice: The Judeo-Christian Background before Origen* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Univ. Press, 1978) 311–372, 498–508; Dom Gregory Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 2nd ed. (Westminster [London]: Dacre Press, 1949) 110–118; G.W.H. Lampe, "The Eucharist in the Thought of the Early Church," in *Eucharistic Theology Then and Now*, ed. R.E. Clemens (London: SPCK, 1968), 38–46; and Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the West: History and Theology*, ed. Robert Daly (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 8–23. The pertinent church fathers on the Eucharist in connection with either sacrifice or altar include *Didache* 14; Ignatius of Antioch, *Philadelphians* 4; *Ephesians* 5.2; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 41.1–3, 117.1–3; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* IV 17.5, 18.1–6; Tertullian, *Exh. Cast.* 10.5; 11; *AT* 4.11–12; and Cyprian, *Epistle* 63.

40 *Didascalia* 9; Latin: *DA* XXVI, in Tidner, 42; Greek: *AC* 2.27, *SC* 320: 240.

41 Didascalia 9; Latin: *DA* XXV-XXVI, in Tidner, 42; Greek: *AC* 2.26, *SC* 320: 240.

those who are distressed and gives to each according to his stewardship…"[42] The "altar" in this context, though related to the offerings provided in worship, refers not to the Eucharistic altar, but metaphorically to the poor and distressed within the community. They constitute the "altar." The "sacrifices" brought to the bishop-priest are those goods and gifts which in turn are taken to the widows and orphans, "those who are distressed."

Thus, the priestly function of the bishop does relate to his task as one who receives and distributes the "offerings" of the people. Nevertheless, the Eucharistic sacrifice plays little role, if any, in the conception of the bishop as priest. In fact, the one chapter where Christian worship is addressed explicitly (chapter 12), the Eucharistic rite receives almost no attention.[43] As Collin Bulley notes, "Although there is no doubt, then, that the author of the *Didascalia* viewed the bishop as the one who normally presided at the Eucharist… he nowhere relates the bishop's priesthood specifically to this function."[44] Schöllgen also recognizes this absence of a Eucharist-priesthood connection and observes that "the liturgical service of the clergy in the *Didascalia* strongly recedes altogether."[45] Although the ministration of the Eucharistic service may be one of the functions of the *Didascalia's* bishop, it by no means holds a primacy of place or lies as the basis for understanding the bishop as a priest. Rather the bishop's more general role as one who presides over all of worship (including but not limited to the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving) seems to be the connecting point for the priesthood motif.

The priestly depiction of the bishop, then, finds repeated emphasis in the *DA*, both terminologically and conceptually, and at times relates to the bishop's task of presiding over "sacrificial" worship; yet, these priestly depictions do not seem to arise from the bishop's specific role in presiding over the

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42 Didascalia 9; Latin: *DA* XXVI, in Tidner, 42; see also *AC* 2.27, *SC* 320: 242, for a slightly revised version in Greek.

43 It is for this reason that Schöllgen does not want to place the *Didascalia* in the same category (*Kirchenordnung*) as the *Didache* and the *AT*.

44 Bulley, *Priesthood*, 130.

45 "Der liturgischen Dienst des Klerus in der Didaskalie ingesamt stark zurücktritt." Schöllgen, *Die Anfänge*, 91. Oddly, later in this same work, Schöllgen seems to suggest conflicting conclusions. On the one hand, he argues that the priestly understanding of the bishop is best explained because of the "understanding of the Eucharist as sacrifice" and "the liturgy of the Eucharistic celebration" (*Die Anfänge*, 105). On the same page, however, he argues that the bishop is spoken of as a priest in connection with the Eucharist in only a few places (*Die Anfänge*, 105).

Eucharistic sacrifice. What, then, can better explain the DA's attribution of the bishop as a priest?

Religio-Political Ecclesiology

Continuity with Israel

If one thing is clear about the ecclesiological identity in the *Didascalia*, it is the firm conviction that the Christian community fulfills biblical Israel; that, as Marcel Simon puts it, "church and Israel are synonymous, Christianity and the authentic Judaism are blended together."[46] From the start of the text this connection is made clear. The preface to the treatise begins:

> The planting of God's vineyard, his catholic church and elect, those who believe in that true religion which is without error, who gain the eternal kingdom and who through faith in his kingdom receive virtue and the participation of his Holy Spirit, who are to be honored as participants of the sprinkling of the innocent blood of Christ, who receive the confidence to call the Almighty God Father… Hear the sacred doctrine.[47]

The "catholic church" here is identified on the one hand as that body of the "elect" who participate in "the sprinkling of the innocent blood of Christ," evoking 1 Peter 1:2: "To those who are elect exiles… in the sanctification of the Spirit, for the obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood." On the other hand, this same group is likened to "the planting of God's vineyard," which evokes the parable of the vineyard in Isaiah 5:1–17. Here in Isaiah, God sings "a love song for my beloved" (5:1) in which "the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel" (5:7). In the *Didascalia's* opening sentence, then, the continuity between Israel and the Christian community is asserted. That former vineyard of Israel finds expression in the present "catholic church."

Likewise, the bishops are instructed: you "shall not be ill-tempered with the people of God which is delivered into your hands. You shall not disperse

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46 "Ainsi, Église et Israël sont synonymes, christianisme et judaïsme authentique se confondent." Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: Ètude sur les Relations entre chrétiens et Juifs dans l'Empire Romain (135–425)* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1964), 104.

47 *Didascalia* 1; Latin: *DA* I, in Tidner, 2. This preface is not found in the Greek *AC*.

the Lord's household, nor scatter his people …"[48] Here, the identification of the church—"people of God," "the Lord's household," "his people"—utilizes the same designations for Israel in the Old Testament and thus evokes again the understanding of the church as the fulfillment of God's plan with Israel.[49]

In a later chapter, the author attacks the Judaizing tendencies within the church by refashioning this church-Israel dialectic in much sharper terms. God's favor once bestowed upon the Jews has now been turned toward the Gentiles of the church: "All the activity of the Lord our God has passed from the people [i.e. the Jews] to the church by means of ourselves, the apostles. He has abandoned the people and left them… So he has left the people and has filled the church."[50] Yet even here, in a passage that smacks much more strongly of a "replacement theology," the author continues to maintain that the church is the *fulfillment* of God's plan with Israel:

> Since therefore he has abandoned the people, he has also deserted the temple as a wilderness, tearing the veil of the temple and taking from them the Holy Spirit. "For behold," he says, "your house will be left to you desolate" (Matt. 23:38). And he gave to you among the Gentiles the spiritual grace, as he says through the prophet Joel, "And it will be after these things, says God, I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh and your sons will prophecy and your daughters will see visions and your old men will dream dreams. For God has taken away from the people the power and efficacy of his word, and such visitations, and has given it to you among the Gentiles" (Joel 2:28).[51]

While dismissing God's favor for the Jews after the destruction of the Temple, the *Didascalia* maintains that the church (i.e. "those among the Gentiles") represents the fulfillment of God's plans *to Israel* as expressed in the prophecy from Joel. In other words, there is a clear distinction made between biblical Israel on the one hand and contemporary Jews on the other whom Christians face every day. While stressing discontinuity with contemporary Judaism, the *Didascalia* nevertheless enforces a strong continuity with biblical Israel.

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48 *Didascalia* 12, in Stewart-Sykes, *Didascalia*, 174. This text is unavailable in either the Latin fragments or the AC. For the Syriac, see Vööbus, CSCO 407:143.

49 See for example, Lev. 26:12; Jer. 7:23; Jer. 30:22; Ezek. 36:28; and Ps. 92:13.

50 *Didascalia* 23, in Stewart-Sykes, *Didascalia*, 227–2288. Syriac: Vööbus, CSCO 407:226. This passage is not available in Latin and the *Apostolic Constitutions* Greek is sufficiently expanded and revised that it cannot be relied upon as original. The *Didascalia* is written under the guise of apostolic authorship; thus the self-reference.

51 *Didascalia* 23; Greek: AC 6.5, SC 329:304–306. Not available in Latin.

This alleged continuity with Israel allows the author to reject certain Jewish practices while at the same time claim the Jewish Scriptures for Christians. One striking example of this appropriation comes from chapter 9 wherein the church is called to reflect on the experience of biblical Israel as if it were their experience as well:

> Hear these things also, you laymen, the elect church of God. For the former people also were called "people of God" and a "holy nation;" therefore you also are a holy catholic church, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, an adopted people, a great church, a bride adorned for the Lord God. Those things which were formerly said, you hear now in the present… Hear, O holy and catholic church, who was delivered from the ten plagues, received the ten commandments, learned the law, who hold the faith and believe in the Lord Jesus.[52]

The "former people of God" (Israel) are found now in the new people of God (the church). Yet it is more than mere replacement; a real, almost organic, continuity exists according to the *Didascalia*, such that the experiences of biblical Israel (the ten plagues, the giving of the law and so on) are portrayed as the actual experiences of the church itself. In the fullest sense, then, the *DA* contends that the Jewish Scriptures belong to the church as God's very words and dealings with Christians.

Perhaps no stronger outworking of this principle of continuity is found than in the *Didascalia's* portrayal of the bishop as priest. As seen just above, the church is cast in Israelite relief such that the experiences of biblical Israel are claimed as the experiences of the church itself. The plagues, the divine rescue from Egypt, and the giving of the law at Sinai are the experiences of the church now; yet, the text modifies this continuity with Israel in the next breath: "The sacrifices which existed formerly are now prayers and petitions and acts of thanksgiving; formerly there were first-fruits and tithes and portions and gifts, but now there are offerings which are made to God for the remission of sins through the bishop. For they are your high priests."[53] In the fuller context, this "typological"[54] articulation of the bishop as priest finds its grounding in a robust notion that the church carries forward all that was given to Israel. They share Israel's experiences of

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52 *Didascalia* 9; Latin: *DA* XXV, in Tidner, 40–41; Greek: *AC* 2.26, *SC* 320: 234–236.

53 *Didascalia* 9; Latin: *DA* XXV, in Tidner, 41; Greek: *AC* 2.26, *SC* 320: 236.

54 I use this term in large part because the author of the *Didascalia* will use it later on in a text speaking of the relationship between Tabernacle and church (see below).

God's divine grace and deliverance, his giving of the law at Sinai, and a model of priestly leadership.

This strong assertion of continuity notwithstanding, there are discontinuities as well. Throughout the treatise, there is a very careful distinction between the law given at Sinai (a law still binding for Christians) and the "deuterosis" or Second Legislation given after the sin of the golden calf (a set of laws not binding for Christians).[55] Likewise, in the passage just cited, the author makes a clear distinction between the old type of sacrifices (prescribed under the Second Legislation) and the sacrifices valid for the church (praise and thanksgiving). While the priestly paradigm of leadership obtains between biblical Israel and the church, there is obviously no suggestion that the bishop-priests ought to be offering animal sacrifices or that there is a one-to-one correspondence between old and new priesthood paradigms. There is no literal appropriation of the Levitical priesthood. Yet, even so, as Hans Achelis has observed, "in certain cases, the institutions of the church must be modeled after the image of Israel"[56] according to the *DA*.

Another key passage which demonstrates this underlying continuity with Israel comes from chapter 8. In a section discussing the proper conduct of a bishop, the author takes time to detail the benefits due to the bishop, namely that he has the right to live off the revenue of the Christian community. Borrowing from Paul's use of Deuteronomy 25:4, *DA* argues that the ox should not be muzzled when it treads out the grain (see 1 Cor. 9:9), and then makes

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55 This distinction can be found in numerous places throughout the *Didascalia*. For example, chapter 2 has a lengthy discussion of this distinction in which the audience is commanded: "when you read the Law, beware of the Second Legislation... For there is a Law which the Lord God spoke before the people committed idolatry, and this is the Decalogue. But after they had sinned, he placed upon them the bonds." (Latin: *DA* III, in Tidner 6; Greek: *AC* 1.6, *SC* 320: 116–118). For a discussion of this perspective in the *DA*, see Connolly, *Didascalia*, lxii-lxiv; and van Unnick, "Moses' Law," 12–13, 19–21. Van Unnick makes the interesting suggestion that the author could negate certain ritual laws such as dietary restrictions, circumcision and purity laws while at the same time affirm a priesthood typology because the tabernacle and priesthood "had already been delivered before that fateful and regrettable day of the Gold Calf. Everything said about priests in the Law remains valid" (21). For a fuller discussion of the question of possible "redactional layers" upon the understanding of the law in this text, see Stewart-Sykes, *Didascalia*, 22–33. He argues that the strong interest in "the issue of continuing law observance on the part of Jewish Christians" is a concern of the "later redactors" (44).

56 "Die Einrichtungen in der Kirche haben sich im einzelnen nach dem Vorbild in Israel zu richten." Achelis, *Didaskalia*, 360.

application to the ministers of the church who also should benefit and live from their work. Yet unlike Paul, the *Didascalia* draws out this analogy even further by moving from the Deuteronomic law to an emphasis on an ecclesiological continuity. Just as the ox eats the grain,

> so [you bishops] who work in the threshing floor, that is in the church of God, be nourished from the church, just like the Levites who minister in the tabernacle of witness, which in all things was a type (*typos*) of the church. For in fact even by its name the tabernacle foreshadowed the "witness" of the church… The offerings of the people were the lot of Levi and the inheritance of his tribe. Therefore today you, O bishops, are to your people priests (*hiereis*) and Levites, those who serve the holy tabernacle, the holy and catholic church, who stand before the Lord your God.[57]

Again, the bishop-as-priest typology lies in the context of a fuller articulation of ecclesiological expressions about Israel and the church. From this passage, the author suggests that because Israel, and even the tabernacle, typifies the church, so too Israelite priestly leadership corresponds to the Christian episcopal leadership in a way that Christians can designate their bishops as "priests." This ecclesiological connection between Israel and the church lies behind the identification of the bishop as a priest.

Two points of observation are in order here. First, the two chapters in the *DA* which focus the greatest attention on the episcopacy (chapters 8 and 9) also employ the strongest priestly metaphors for the bishop. Second, within these two chapters, an ecclesiological continuity with Israel finds strong articulation. Thus, the conclusions of scholars who downplay the sacerdotal imagery in the *DA* must be reassessed, while the ecclesiological motif as a strong theological catalyst and impetus for this typological connection between bishops and priests must receive stronger recognition.

Jewish-Christian Relations: A Political Ecclesiology

The portrayal of the church as the fulfillment of Israel was not just a theologically abstract idea or merely playful exegesis. Rather, given the cultural and political situation of third century Syria and northern Palestine, there was also a very real interaction between Jewish and Christian communities of

57 *Didascalia* 8; Greek: *AC* 2.25, *SC* 320: 228–230. The Greek *AC* has "who stand before the altar of the Lord your God." This may be an addition to the original, though it is hard to say. No Latin available.

this time. Without a doubt, these dynamics had to have played a role in the emergence of priestly designations in the *DA*.

A number of scholars have demonstrated that Jewish-Christian dialogue and tension existed in the Roman Empire well into the fourth century.[58] Though evidence for such interaction in the second and third century is less available, it can be confidently maintained that such a dynamic existed, especially in the Antiochan and Syrian region. Such tension between these two communities underlies much of the *Didascalia*. As Marcel Simon notes, "the writing [of the *DA*] is conceivable only in a region with strong Jewish communities."[59] As A. Marmorstein observes, given the work's rejection of Sabbath laws, purity laws, circumcision, the entire Second Legislation, and given its "specific purpose of frightening away Jewish-Christians from Jewish practices and usages,"[60] *DA* clearly has a very real threat in mind.

Despite this attitude toward current Jewish practice, there is still an ongoing interaction between Jews and Christians. Simon points out that rather than contempt for Jews, the *Didascalia* conveys a genuine concern for their error. It calls them "brothers" at one point while the prayers in the *DA* lack the full invective against the Jews typical of other anti-Jewish texts.[61] Moreover, others have noted the *Didascalia's* strong indebtedness to rabbinic teaching. For example, in the admonitions against attending the theatre and circus, the author of the *Didascalia* marshals biblical support, saying "anyone who enters the assembly of the gentiles shall be counted as one of them, and shall receive the woe. For the Lord God speaks by means of Isaiah to those who are such: 'Woe, woe to them that come from the spectacle.' And again he says: 'Come, you women who are coming from the spectacle, since it is a people without

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58 See for example, Simon, *Verus Israel*; Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1999) and *Border Lines* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Penn. Press, 2004); Wayne Meeks and Robert Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era* (Missoula, Mont: Scholars Press for the Society of Biblical Literature, 1978); Robert Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind* (New Haven: Yale, 1971); and Robert Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

59 "L'écrit n'est concevable que dans une région à fortes juiveries." Simon, *Verus Israel*, 366.

60 A. Marmorstein, "Judaism and Christianity in the Middle of the Third Century," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 10 (1935): 231–232.

61 *Didascalia* 21; Greek: *AC* 5.14, *SC* 329: 248–260. See Simon, *Verus Israel*, 365.

understanding.'"[62] This quote by "Isaiah" is actually a composite of citations and allusions to both Isaiah 37:11 and a Jewish Targum of Ps.-Jonathan on Deuteronomy 28:19 which says "Cursed shall you be when you enter your theatres and your circuses, negating the words of the Law."[63] This prohibition in the *Didascalia* strongly suggests an awareness and use of rabbinic teaching.

Likewise, *Didascalia* 7 uses the repentance and forgiveness of Manasseh, the king of Judah, as a model of proper humility and repentance over sin, an example also used in rabbinic literature.[64] In the *Didascalia*, a large portion of Scripture is cited recounting the sin of Manasseh, his punishment, and finally his repentance and forgiveness. Yet, in recording that Manasseh was bound and led away to Babylon, certain manuscripts add a non-biblical detail that he was led away "in a brass statue." Compare this with the Targum of 2 Chronicles 33:12: "Then the Chaldaeans made a bronze mule and bored many small holes in it. They shut him up inside it and lit a fire all around it…"[65] As Connolly suggests, the *Didascalian* variant "must have some connexion with the story in the late Targum on 2 Chron. xxxiii, to the effect that Manasseh was inclosed in 'a mule of brass.'"[66] Together, these claims, arguments, and textual support employed by the *DA* demonstrate both a Christian indebtedness to Judaism for much of its own textual reading and application, even while distancing themselves from contemporary Jewish practice.

The flow of influence was not, of course, one-sided, and numerous examples can be found where Jews were as much aware of what Christians were saying as Christians were of Jews.[67] All of this demonstrates that within the

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62 *Didascalia* 13, in Stewart-Sykes, *Didascalia*, 180. Syriac: Vööbus, *CSCO* 407:152. This text is not available in Latin and the Greek *Apostolic Constitutions* does not contain these citations.

63 *Targum: Pseudo-Jonathan: Deuteronomy*, trans. Ernest G. Clarke, The Aramaic Bible 5B (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1997), 76. See Stewart-Sykes, *Didascalia*, 180 n.14; see also Vööbus, *CSCO* 408:138, n.26.

64 See for example m.Sanh. 11.1 and b.Sanh. 103a.

65 *Targum: Ruth and Chronicles*, trans. J. Stanley McIvor and Derek Beattie, The Aramaic Bible 19 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1987), 230.

66 *Didascalia* 7, in Connolly, *Didascalia*, 72, note on line 8; and p. 263 for further discussion on and a reproduction of the Targum text.

67 For example, *Didascalia* 23 and 24 demonstrate a strong attitude that the destruction of the Temple indicates God's abandonment of the Jews (God has "left the people and has filled the church"). This argument was not unknown to the Jews, and the rabbinic literature demonstrates both their awareness of it and their attempt to combat it with their own teaching. The *Mishnah*, *Babylonian Talmud* and midrashic literature repeatedly answer this

Didascalian community, there was an undoubted interaction and ongoing dialogue between Christians and Jews, if not downright tension. This awareness of the "other" influenced the theology and textual reading of each group as they tried to bolster their own theological and practical legitimacy and authenticity. The *Didascalia* particularly warns its community to avoid being too "Jewish" in ritual and observance, even while utilizing certain Jewish textual readings in a more positive light. Yet, given this dynamic of tension and dialogue, and particularly the *DA*'s interest to avoid appearing too Jewish, why would there be such a strong emphasis on an Israelite priestly metaphor for the Christian bishop?

One solution might come from examining the shift in the locus of authority in rabbinic Judaism of the late-second and early-third centuries. Recent scholarship has suggested that the rise of rabbinic Judaism was the result of a successful transition from a priestly to a non-priestly locus of authority within Judaism. Steven Fraade, for example, has examined midrashic and mishnaic texts to discover exactly this movement, what he calls "a dialectical shift from authority vested entirely in the hereditary priesthood to authority assigned to non-priests by virtue of their learning and experience in matters of Torah law and its application."[68] For example, Fraade notes that in m.Negaim 3.1, there is a discussion of skin infections in Leviticus 13.[69] Whereas the biblical text explicitly commands that someone with a skin infection, "shall be brought to the priest and the priest shall make an examination" (Lev. 13:9–10), the rabbinic text expands

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charge against the Jews and their standing before God, suggesting they were well aware of the accusation (see b.Pes. 87b; b.Ta'anith 20a; b.Sotah 38b; Lev. Rabbah 6.5; Eccl. Rabbah 1.4).

A particularly interesting example of this awareness of the "other" comes from a fifth century midrashic text, *Leviticus Rabbah*. In 25.6, the midrash takes up the account about Abraham and Melchizedek from Genesis 14. In the discussion, the midrash explicitly attacks the Christian notion that the Gentile Christian priesthood was foreshadowed in the Mechizedekian priesthood of the Scriptures. The fact that *Leviticus Rabbah* would take up such an argument demonstrates a clear Jewish knowledge of Christian claims. As Burton Visoztky comments, such a polemic "betrays a sophisticated knowledge of Christian theology;" yet, from our earlier examples in the *Didascalia*, we can equally posit a thorough Christian knowledge of rabbinic teaching ("Anti-Christian Polemic in Leviticus Rabbah," *American Academy for Jewish Research* 56 [1990]: 100).

68 Steven Fraade, "Shifting from Priestly to Non-Priestly Legal Authority: A Comparison of the Damascus Document and the Midrash Sifra," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 6, no. 2 (1999): 122.

69 Fraade lays out other evidence for this thesis, but for the sake of brevity, I produce just this one.

the formerly priestly task by saying that "all are eligible to inspect."[70] As Fraade explains, the Mishnah does not eliminate the need for examination or even for a qualified examiner, but affirms "that this function is *not* dependent upon priestly lineage per se."[71] All those who are qualified, "which for the Mishnah would suggest a sage,"[72] can now claim the authority formerly reserved for Aaronic priests, leaving the role of such priests "limited, formal and vestigial."[73]

More recently, Daniel Boyarin has made similar arguments, suggesting that at the end of the second and beginning of the third century, a new rabbinic authority brought about a "disenfranchisement of the previous holders of knowledge/power, the priests."[74] In examining the well-known rabbinic transmission lists in m.Avot 1, Boyarin notes the noticeable lack of any priests in these catalogues. He concludes: "Since a large part of the attempted rabbinic takeover of religious power involved displacing the priests, this absence is highly telling, especially when we realize that prior succession lists of this type found in pre-rabbinic texts do include the priests."[75] In other words, the rise of rabbinic Judaism, the Judaism with which the *Didascalian* Christians were in dialogue, involved a displacing, even forfeiting, of the traditional biblical role of the Jewish priesthood and investing the rabbinic sage with all the power and authority of the Jewish religion.

Such a milieu of shifting *loci* of authority creates an ideal environment in which rival communities will wrestle with how to read, understand and appropriate for themselves certain priestly texts in their shared scriptures. Especially after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, both Jews and Christians must approach texts such as Leviticus and the priestly requirements in new ways.[76] As mentioned earlier, the *Didascalian* notion of the church in continuity with Israel was not just a theologically abstract exegesis, but one grounded in actual cultural dynamics. The Christians, at least, attempted to employ their own interpretive reading in which the previous notion of Israel as a "type" of the church could be expanded to include the portrayal of the biblical

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70 m. Negaim 3:1; see also Fraade, 118.

71 Fraade, "Shifting," 118, italics his.

72 Fraade, "Shifting," 118.

73 Fraade, "Shifting," 119.

74 Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 74.

75 Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 77.

76 For more on this, see Robert Wilken, "Levitcus as a Book of the Church," *Consensus* 23 no.1 (1997):7–19.

priesthood as a typology for Christian leadership. This is not to say that the rabbinic restructuring of authority was the *cause* of a Christian priesthood; rather, the complex dynamics involved in both Jewish and Christian communities regarding scriptural interpretation after the Temple destruction must necessarily involve an interpretation and appropriation of certain ritual and cultic texts. My point, then, is that these interpretive readings and textual appropriations did not take place in a vacuum; they involved a concrete social reality of two communities in tension reading a shared text in a world in which the Temple no longer existed and animal sacrifice could no longer be practiced.

All of this leads us from a purely abstract and theological claim about a church-Israel connection to a much more concrete, social, even political claim of continuity with biblical Israel even while distancing themselves from contemporary Jews and their practices. In this sense, Christians were a growing social reality at odds with the Jewish social group. The assertion of continuity with Israel was more than an ideological and theological projection; it also entailed a concrete social and political claim to be the true "people of God" in third-century Syria, over against their contemporary Jewish neighbors who likewise claimed that title for themselves. In this sense, the church was expressing a religio-political ecclesiology. Von Campenhausen hints in this direction when he remarks that "they have strongly developed their ecclesial self-understanding and the notion of their own distinct law. The 'nation' of the Christians feels itself to be a unique, great and morally superior community in the world…"[77] In short, Christianity has carved out its own social reality, existing alongside the cultures of paganism and Judaism.

In fact, the *Didascalia* itself demonstrates this notion of the church as a distinct social group of its own. In chapter 9, the author commends reverence for the bishop by use of an extended contrast with Judaism and the pagan culture. The Christian bishop, says the author, must be central to worship,

> for neither formerly in the Temple was anything holy offered nor was anything done without the priest. And even the worshippers of demons, in their abominable, disgusting and impure detestations, utterly imitate the holy things to this very day. Of course there is a wide distance in comparing their disgusting practices with those of

77 "haben auch ihr kirchliches Selbst- und Rechtsbewussstsein kräftig entwickelt. Das 'Volk' der Christen fühlt sich al seine eigene, grosse, sittlich überlegene Gemeinschaft in der Welt…" Hans von Campenhausen, *Kirchliches Amt und geistliche Vollmacht in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1963), 262.

> the holy ones, yet in their pretense, they neither offer nor perform anything without their impure priest.[78]

Given the propriety displayed by even the pagans towards their priests, who are really only imitators of true worship, the *Didascalia* concludes: "how much more reasonable is it for you… to honor the Lord God through those set over you [i.e. the bishops]."[79] The Christian community is set in contrast to both the pagan culture and to the Israelite Temple cult, both of which practiced worship via a priesthood. Though related to each by virtue of worship practices and presiding leadership, Christianity stands apart in its own distinct social identity.

Likewise in chapter 13, the Christian community is urged to "gather in large numbers in the church (*in ecclesia*)" and to "lay everything aside and run together to the church (*ad ecclesiam*)."[80] The text then moves into another comparison with paganism and Judaism: since "the pagans, rising from their sleep each day run to their idols to worship them… and in the same manner those who are vainly called Jews, after six days, are idle on the seventh day and go together into their synagogues,"[81] how much more should Christians gather together in the church?

These texts demonstrate the community's solidifying awareness of itself as a particular culture, *polis*, or as Rordorf calls it, "ein Staat im Staat"[82] (a state within the state), with its own form of worship and governance in distinction from its surrounding counterparts. Gathering for Christian worship, as the author intimates, was more than a theological and spiritual exercise; it was also a political and cultural activity in which each Christian was expected to participate. Given this self-perspective on Christianity and the church, it is no surprise that the bishop began to accrue not only designations like "priest" but also "prince," "king," and "ruler"—he was the leader of a living body of "citizens."[83] Moreover, there is a growing sense in the *DA* that the church

78 *Didascalia* 9; Greek: *AC* 2.26, *SC* 320: 246.

79 *Didascalia* 9; Greek: *AC* 2.26, *SC* 320: 248.

80 *Didascalia* 13; Latin: *DA* XXX, in Tidner, 48–49; Greek: *AC* 2.59, *SC* 320: 324.

81 *Didascalia* 13; Latin: *DA* XXX, in Tidner, 48–49; Greek: *AC* 2.59, *SC* 320: 324.

82 Willy Rordorf, "Was wissen wir über die christlichen Gottesdienstraüme der vorkonstantinischen Zeit" *Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 55, no. 1–2 (1964): 111.

83 See for example, *Didascalia* 8 & 9.

occupies not just an ideological space in a realm of ideas, but an actual space and place in the world, much like the nation of Israel did in her time.

A Christian Material Culture

On numerous occasions, the *Didascalia* speaks of the church as "the house" or "the house of God." In its instructions for excommunication, for instance, the bishop is advised to "cast out" sinners from the church lest the words of Jesus become true, "My house (*oikos*) is called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves" (Matt. 21:13, citing Is. 56:7). This is an interesting choice of texts, for the Isaiah section of the citation is speaking of the house of the Temple in Jerusalem and Jesus' words are spoken also in reference to the same Temple. The implication is that the Christian church corresponds to the Old Testament Temple, and just as the priests of old were responsible for guarding the purity of the Temple and its sacred objects, so too, the bishops are to act as priests guarding this new "house" or "temple" of God.

As we saw earlier, there was an even stronger comparison between the ancient Tabernacle and the Christian church. There in chapter 8, the *Didascalia* defended the right of a bishop to live off the offerings of the church, not only because the priests of old did the same, but also because "the tabernacle of witness… was a type (*typos*) of the church."[84] Again, in chapter 11, the community is instructed to resolve all quarrels between themselves so that there might be peace between all, because "they who enter a house (*oikon*) ought to say, 'Peace to this house.'"[85] In this way, claims the *DA*, "we might do the will of God and fill the house (*oikon*) with guests, that is, his holy catholic church (*ekklēsian*)…"[86] The "house" then is none other than the church itself.

One must admit that these references to the church as the "house of God" can refer metaphorically to the worshipping community, a "house(hold)" of believers. As Georg Schöllgen and others have noted, this notion of the church as the "house(hold) of God" finds similar expression throughout the

84 *Didascalia* 8; Greek: *AC* 2.25, *SC* 320: 228–230.

85 *Didascalia* 11; Greek: *AC* 2.54, *SC* 320: 304. Citing Matthew 10:12.

86 *Didascalia* 11; Greek: *AC* 2.56, *SC* 320: 310. Certain Greek *AC* manuscripts have instead, "fill the feast-chamber with guests which is the holy catholic church."

New Testament.[87] This is what drives Schöllgen to see *oikonomos* as the major depiction of bishop in the *DA*: the bishop functions primarily as the manager of the Christian *oikos*, which is simply the community of believers. It is easy to see why some might read the *DA* in this way; yet, in the context of the early third century, these references to "house of God," especially in light of equating the church with the "tabernacle" of Israel, are expanding and enriching the earlier New Testament usage in more concrete ways. In the context of the *DA* itself, however, the use of the term "house" seems to appropriate the New Testament notion of a Christian community (household), but then invest it with broader, more concrete ideas of Christianity as a spatial "place" in the world.

A number of scholars have begun to identify the late-second and early-third century as a period of significant development in early Christian identity formation, particularly in relation to a material culture. Paul Finney remarks that during this stage "Christians possessed their own prayer-houses (*domus ecclesiae*), altars (*altaria*), cups (*calices*), plates (*paterae*) and paintings."[88] In other words, a Christian material culture was clearly beginning to emerge. During this period, as Hans-Josef Klauck observes, there come to exist buildings that the community owns "in which there were unique liturgical rooms which were set apart from the profane use."[89] While the first and second centuries might be deemed "die Zeit der Hauskirchen,"[90] from the early third century onward, buildings arose which served the Christian community

87 Schöllgen emphasizes the Pastoral Epistles in *Die Anfänge*, 106–107, 116; see also Achelis, *Didaskalia*, 272. See Heb. 10:21; Eph. 2:19; 1 Tim. 3:15; and 1 Pet. 4:17 all of which refer to the church in general as the "house of God."

88 "Christen ihre eigenen Gebetshäuser (domus ecclesiae), Altaere (altaria), Kelche (calices), Teller (paterae) und (private) Bilder besassen." Paul Corby Finney, "TOPOS HIEROS und christlicher Sakralbau in vorkonstantinischer Überlieferung" *Boreas: Münsterche Beiträge zur Archaeologie* 7 (1984): 216. Friederich Deichmann also recognizes this shift ("Vom Tempel Zur Kirche" in *Mullus: Festschrift Theodor Klauser*, eds. Alfred Stuiber and Alfred Hermann [Münster: Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum, Erganzungsband 1, 1964], 52–59).

89 "... in denen es eigene gottesdienstliche Raeume gab, die der profanen Nutzung entzogen waren…" Hans-Josef Klauck, *Hausgemeinde und Hauskirche im frühen Christentum* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1981), 69.

90 Rordorf, "Gottesdienstraüme," 111. By this phrase, Rordorf means a time when houses were used both as worship spaces and also as residential homes. By his definition, "house church" means a worship space that did not serve exclusively as such. Rordorf himself notes that the church in Dura was also a "house," but one converted for the sole purpose of Christian worship. In this way, it is not a "house church" in this original sense.

exclusively as worship spaces. The most notable example of such development comes from the findings at the Syrian excavation of Dura Europos.

Sometime between AD 240 and 245 a group of Christians in Dura Europos acquired a former residential building and converted it into a church building to be used exclusively for worship.[91] The rooms of particular note are the baptistery and the assembly hall. The baptistery is well known for its "richly embellished"[92] and decorated wall murals. This is one of the earliest and clearest examples of an emerging "Christian" artwork which depicts biblical scenes of both the Old and New Testaments and roots the Christian identity in a continuity with Israel, Jesus, and the current worshipping community. As Kraeling remarks, the "Baptistery decoration enhanced the importance of the individual's entry into Christ's flock."[93] The art helped make more visible and concrete the realities to which it pointed; one's baptism identified and located oneself within this larger biblical and apostolic community.

The other major liturgical room, the assembly hall, was originally two rooms; the dividing wall was removed by the Christian community and the floor leveled off to make one large assembly room that could hold between 60 and 70 people. Oriented on an east-west axis, the east end of the room featured a low plaster dais, most likely used by the bishop to preside over the worship service. No wall decorations were created for this room.[94]

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91 Dating of the building construction is generally agreed upon at AD 232/3. Scholars differ, however, over whether this is when Christians came into possession of the building or simply when it was constructed. Most scholars today argue that Christians did not come into possession of the building until the 240's. For a fuller review of this debate and the evidence used, see Carl H. Kraeling and C. Bradford Welles, *The Christian Building*, The Excavations at Dura-Europos, Final Report VIII, Pt.II (New Haven: Dura-Europos Publications, 1967), 233–238. L. Michael White dates Christian usage at 240–41 (see *Social Origins*, vol. 1, 120); and Richard Krautheimer argues for 231 as the date the building became Christian possession (*Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* [Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965], 6). Klauck, on the other hand, agrees that 240–245 is most likely the period the building became Christian (*Hausgemeinde*, 80). That this building no longer remained a residential home is evidenced by the plastering over of the latrine (see Kraeling, 155).

92 Kraeling, *Christian Building*, 44.

93 Kraeling, *Christian Building*, 225.

94 There has been some debate about why the walls in the baptistery were so well decorated while the ones in the assembly hall were not. Various suggestions have been made, but given the short tenure of the Christians in this building (the city was occupied by the military in AD 256), I find it likely that they simply did not have time to fully decorate the entire

What makes the building at Dura so significant, as Rordorf comments, is that "apparently all the rooms of this house-church served a liturgical purpose."[95] Likewise, Klauck indicates that "we stand in a transition from inhabited private houses which were at the same time an assembly place for Christians, to a pure church building…"[96] Thus, Dura Europos gives us evidence that in Syria during the early third century, Christian communities began to acquire property and, more important, began to set it aside exclusively for sacred liturgical purposes.

Related to this architectural transition, another significant shift in the Christian perspective on space as "sacred" is emerging. Finney, making this same connection, notes that the Dura house church "signifies a development in Christian architecture which goes hand in hand with the maturity of the early Christian notion of the sanctity of places and buildings."[97] The acquisition of a building solely for liturgical purposes, the richly decorated walls in the baptistery, and the creation of a permanent assembly hall for worship, all demonstrate the value and sacredness of the building and its rooms. These were not homes also used for worship, but buildings specifically set aside for the sacred purpose of Christian liturgy and worship.

The notion of sacred space is emerging, then, both in the same time period as the *Didascalia*, and in the very same region. While I want to be careful not to equate the house church at Dura with the worshipping community of the *Didascalia*, the evidence suggests that what we find at Dura, as Kraeling notes, "may safely be taken as typical of the Christian domus ecclesia of the Tigris-Euphrates basin in the pre-Constantinian times and thus as normative for a whole province of church architecture…"[98] A return to the text of the *Didascalia* will demonstrate that a situation similar to that at Dura most likely existed for the community of the *Didascalia*.

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building. They may have started with the baptistery because that was a significant room for Christian initiation, and it shows the value they placed upon this sacred rite.

95 "... all Räume jener Hauskirche offenbar gottesdienstlichen Zwecken gedient haben." Rordorf, "Gottesdienstraüme," 117.

96 "Wir stehen an einem Übergang, vom bewohnten Privathaus, das zugleich Versammlungsstätte der Christen war, zum reinen Kirchengebäude." Klauck, *Hausgemeinde*, 80.

97 "Sie bezeugt die Entwicklungen in der christlichen Architektur, die mit dem Heranreifen der frühchristlichen Auffassung von der Heiligkeit des Ortes und Gebäudes Hand in Hand geht." Finney, "TOPOS HIEROS," 222.

98 Kraeling, *Christian Building*, 139; see also Finney, "TOPOS HIEROS," 222 for similar conclusions.

As Stewart-Sykes observes, "The prescriptions here [in the *DA*] fit remarkably closely with the archeological evidence supplied by the house church excavated at Dura Europos, significantly enough in Syria. It would not be unreasonable to see this community worshipping in a similarly converted domestic complex."[99]

Of particular note are the instructions for worship given in chapter 12. Rather than specify the proper administration or theology of the Eucharist or baptism, what concerns the author are rather the spatial realities of the building:

> Now, in your congregations in the holy churches your gatherings should be conducted with good order. Appoint places for the brothers with care and gravity; the place of the presbyters should be separate, at the east end of the house, and the bishop's seat (*thronos*) should be set among them, and the presbyters should sit with him. It is in another eastern part of the house that the laymen are to sit, for so it is required… One of the deacons should continue to stand by the offerings of the eucharist; another should stand outside the door observing those who come in.[100]

The author is intensely concerned with the layout of worship, where people sit, who attends to the door and how the room is oriented toward the east. As mentioned earlier, the Dura house church assembly room was also oriented on an east-west axis.[101] There is an appreciation and awareness of the worshipping sacred space in this community. In the next chapter, the *DA* continues its discussion of the Christian assembly space, admonishing believers to "run together to your church." This is then contrasted on the one hand with the pagans who also "rise from their sleep and go in the morning to worship and minister to their idols," and with Jews on the other hand who "assemble in their synagogues."[102] Such a comparison points to an implied contrast between both worship practice and the sacred worship space used by each group. In this context one can conclude with Achelis that "the community has

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99 Stewart-Sykes, *Didascalia*, 175 n.1.

100 *Didascalia* 12, in Stewart-Sykes, *Didascalia*, 175; Syriac: Vööbus, *CSCO* 407:143–144. The Greek *AC* 2.57 contains some of this passage, but much has been expanded so as to be unhelpful in reconstructing most of the original Greek.

101 See Rordforf, "Gottesdienstraüme," 121 and Klaus Gamber, "Die frühchristliche Hauskirche nach Didascalia Apostolorum II, 57,1–58,6," *Studia Patristica,* 10 (1970): 340–341, who also make this connection.

102 *Didascalia* 13; Latin: *DA* XXX, in Tidner, 48–49; Greek: *AC* 2.59, *SC* 320: 324.

already been in the position to acquire a unique locale" for worship.[103] Given the acute awareness of space and the place of worship in this text, it is quite probable that this community held worship in a house church similar to that at Dura—a permanent structure (formerly a house) used solely for worship. Thus what Finney concludes regarding the Dura community was likely true for that of the *Didascalia*, that "among the Christians living in this period, a significant shift of consciousness took place in their understanding and usage of places, with respect to buildings. After that, for the first time they become aware of a sanctification of places and buildings in which they gathered for prayer and teaching."[104]

The final chapter of the *DA* demonstrates yet another awareness of the sacredness of space and place, namely, the cemeteries. The text reminds the community:

> gather together in the cemeteries (*koimētēriois/memoriis*) to read the holy Scriptures, to offer unceasing prayers to God, and to offer the likeness (*antitypon/similitudinem*) of the royal body of Christ, the acceptable Eucharist, both in your churches (*ekklēsiais/collectis vestris*) and in your cemeteries (*koimētēriois/coemiteriis*)…[105]

The text continues with a discussion of these holy places by admonishing the community to respect the dead, reminding them that even the bones of the prophet Elisha were able to raise up a dead man, for "his body was holy (*hagion/sanctum*)."[106] The entirety of the Christian life (even the places and bones of the dead) have begun to take on a more concrete and sacred reality. As Achelis remarks, "in the end there was no aspect of human life for which the church had not set up its particular rules. Just as they possessed their own churches and cemeteries, so also they celebrated their own feasts, performed their own liturgy, and celebrated the commemoration of the dead in their own

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103 "Die Gemeinde war schon in der Lage gewesen, sich ein eigenes Lokal zu beschaffen." Achelis, *Didaskalia*, 284.

104 "…unter den Christen, die in dieser Periode gelebt haben, ein bedeutender Bewußtseinswandel in der Auffassung von Orten und in der Einstellung gegenüber Gebäuden stattfand. Danach wurden sie einer Heiligung von Orten und Gebäuden in denen sie sich zum Gebet und zur Lehre versammelten, zum ersten Mal gewahr." Finney, "TOPOS HIEROS," 225.

105 *Didascalia* 26; Latin: *DA* LXI, in Tidner, 98; Greek: *AC* 6.30, *SC* 329: 390.

106 *Didascalia* 26; Latin: *DA* LXII, in Tidner, 99; Greek: *AC* 6.30, *SC* 329: 390. See 2 Kings 13:21 for this account.

unique way."[107] There is a definite sense that the church has taken on its own materially defined cultural existence. Space and place, both in the worship building and in the cemeteries, have taken on a noticeable sanctity and value within Christian life. The *Didascalia* demonstrates that a distinctly Christian sacred space has emerged for this community. The early third century more broadly, and the Syrian *DA* in particular, give witness that the church was forming its own "material culture" in the world.

Conclusion

In light of this emerging notion of sacred space and place, one can revisit the earlier observation that the bishop was seen in the *DA* as the "steward of God" and his "house." In view of this materially distinct culture of Christian sacred space seen in the *DA* itself, the bishop's role as a "steward of God's house" echoes not an *oikonomos* (as Schöllgen suggested) but the biblical function of an Israelite priest. Combine this designation ("steward") with the description of the bishops, seen earlier, as those who "serve in the holy tabernacle, the holy catholic church" and "who stand before the altar of the Lord your God,"[108] and the physical, concrete function of the bishop as a "priest" serving an actual place of worship becomes apparent. As seen previously, one of the major descriptions of the Levitical priest was an "attendant of God's house" in his role as guardian of the Temple worship space. Taking this designation of "attendant/steward" (found in both the Old Testament and the *DA*) together with the notion of sacred space and place evidenced both in the *DA* and in the archaeological data, one finds that the *DA*'s portrayal of the bishop as a priest works on a typological model: just as the Israelite priest was an "attendant to God's house" (the physical Tabernacle or Temple), so too the bishop is the "steward of God's house" (the physical church building and surrounding Christian sacra). The emerging Christian material culture and the resulting awareness of sacred space combines with the religio-political

107 "So gab es schliesslich keine Beziehung des menschlichen Lebens, für welche die Kirche nicht ihre besonderen Grundsätze aufgestellt hätte. Wie sie ihre eigenen Gotteshäuser und Friedhöfe besaß, so feierte sie ihr Feste, vollzog ihren Gottesdienst und beging das Gedächtnis der Toten auf ihre eigene Weise." Hans Achelis, *Das Christentum in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten,* 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1925), 224.

108 *Didascalia* 9; Greek: AC 2.25, SC 320: 230.

ecclesiology of the *DA* to produce a robust typology in which the old Israelite priests foreshadow the new Christian priests, the bishops.

In the end, the *Didascalia*, like the *Apostolic Tradition*, clearly portrays the bishop in priestly terms which echo not pagan models, but biblical ones. Levitical priestly paradigms for the bishop arise as the Christian community combines its firm understanding of itself as the fulfillment of Israel with an emerging Christian material culture such that the old attendants of sacred space (Israelite priests ministering in the Temple) become a typology for the new stewards of Christian sacra (Christian bishop-priests ministering in church buildings and cemeteries).

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RULERS OF THE DIVINE NATION

Origen of Alexandria

The previous two chapters explored priestly designations for the Christian ministry in two separate church orders, one from the west (*Apostolic Tradition*) and one from the east (*Didascalia Apostolorum*); both came from the early third century. Moving forward, I will now examine two prominent thinkers of the mid-third century, looking for their understanding and portrayal of ministerial, priestly leadership via Levitical paradigms. As before, I will examine one representative from the east (Origen) and one from the west (Cyprian).

Origen of Alexandria has been declared "the most immense, the most prolific, and the most particular genius who has illuminated the church of the first centuries."[1] These century-old words of Ferdinand Prat, echoed later by Jean Daniélou, remain an accurate assessment of the importance of Origen in the history of Christianity. No other thinker of the first three centuries has produced such a depth of insight and such a vast command of his

1 "… le génie le plus vaste, le plus fécond et le plus personnel qui ait illustré l'Église des premiers siècles." Ferdiand Prat, *Origène: le théologien et le exégète* (Paris: Librarie Blous, 1907), 165. See also Jean Daniélou, *Origène: le génie du christianisme* (Paris : La Table Ronde, 1948), 7 and John McGuckin, "Origen's Doctrine of Priesthood I," *Clergy Review* 70 n.8 (1985): 277.

subject as Origen (c.AD 185-c.254). Many scholars have demonstrated Origen's thoroughly "philosophical" world of thought and dependence upon Platonic ideas;[2] yet the majority of Origen's theological contribution comes in the unquestionably "biblical" expression of scriptural commentary and exposition. Prat again: "Subtle theologian, incomparable controversialist, patient critic and prolific orator, Origen is above all an exegete."[3] Origen knows his Bible, is shaped by it, and draws his theology from it. He is, in his own words, a "man of the church (*vir ecclesiasticus*), living under the faith of Christ and placed in the midst of the church."[4] As a true *vir ecclesiasticus*, Origen can provide us valuable insight into the developments of early Christianity.

This is no less true in regards to the emerging understanding of the Christian ministry in light of the Old Testament Levitical priesthood. While offering no systematic treatment of the Christian ministry, Origen's many biblical commentaries, homilies, and theological treatises provide ample opportunity to piece together his understanding of the pastoral office in light of priestly paradigms. As Theo Schäfer observes, "No comprehensive account of the priest-image is found in Origen. In order to obtain such a picture, the individual statements on this question must be collected and arranged as stones in a mosaic."[5] How, then, did Origen understand the role and function of the Christian minister within the church? What continuities did Origen see

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2 See for example Eugène de Faye who argues that Origen was nothing more than a Platonic philosopher in Christian disguise (*Origène: sa vie, son oeuvre, sa pensée*, 3 vols. [Paris: E. Leroux, 1923–28], 1 :85–95; 2:156–163).

3 "Théologien subtil, incomparable controversiste, critique patient et orateur fécond, Origène est avant tout exégete." Prat, *Origène*, 111.

4 *Hom.Lev.* 1.1, *SC* 286 : 68. All translations are my own unless specified otherwise. The strongest objections to this view of Origen come from de Faye (see above) and Joseph Trigg, "Origen Man of the Church," in *Origeniana Quinta*, ed. Robert Daly (Leuven Univ. Press, 1992), 51–56. For strong support of the idea that Origen is first and foremost a Christian, not a philosopher in Christian guise, see Henri de Lubac, *Histoire et esprit: l'intelligence de l'écriture d'après Origène* (Paris: Aubier, 1950), esp. chapter 2, "Origène homme l'église," 47–91. See also Jean Daniélou, *Origène, le génie*, 41; and Albano Vilela, *La condition collegiale des prêtres au IIIe siècle* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1971), 127–128.

5 "Es findet sich bei Origenes keine zusammenhängende Darstellung des Priester-bildes. Die einzelnen Aüsserungen zu dieser Frage müssen wie Mosaiksteinchen zusammengetragen und zusammengestellt werden, um ein solches Bild zu erhalten." Theo Schäfer, *Das Priester-Bild im Leben und Werk des Origenes* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1977), 21. See also Aaron Milavec, "The Office of the Bishop in Origen," in *Raising the Torch of Good News*, ed. Bernard Prusak (New York: University Press of America, 1988), 14.

between the Christian minister and Old Testament leadership offices? What intimations does Origen provide as to the driving force behind his conceptions about the episcopacy as a "priestly" office?

Throughout his exegetical works, but particularly in his homilies on Leviticus, Numbers and Joshua, Origen's thoughts on Christian leadership emerge most clearly, and it is through these works that one can construct Origen's view of the Christian minister as priest.[6] First, I will demonstrate that Origen understands the offices of bishop and presbyter as *priestly* offices, understood in light of the Levitical priesthood found in the Old Testament. Second, I will demonstrate that the driving force of Origen's conceptions about the bishop-priest paradigm involves both his religio-political ecclesiology (the church as a unique *polis* in continuity with biblical Israel) and the actual practice of episcopal leadership within the church.

A Christian Priesthood

When exploring a Christian priesthood in Origen, it must first be acknowledged that Origen's doctrine of the priesthood is complex and manifold. Vilela has helpfully summarized Origen's teaching on this topic, noting that Origen

6 The extant homilies on Leviticus, Numbers and Joshua are Rufinus' Latin translations from the original Greek, which Rufinus himself admits are not always literal translations, but rather paraphrastic in nature. Methodologically, one may wonder what worth these sermons have for a discussion of *Origen's* view on the priesthood, or on any issue, for that matter. While it is true that Rufinus does take some liberties with the text, there is good reason for using them in this present study. As Ronald Heine has pointed out, much of what Rufinus changed was based on his belief that heretics had altered Origen's texts (*Origen: Homilies on Genesis and Exodus* [Washington D.C.: Catholic Univ. of America Press, 1982], 30–39). Therefore, wherever Origen appears to contradict himself, or appears out of line with later orthodoxy, Rufinus attempts to emend the text. This particularly applies to issues of Trinitarian doctrine. As Heine notes, "Nevertheless, one may say that, on the whole, the substance can be regarded as representing Origen's thought. The major exception to this is theological statements regarding the Trinity and the resurrection of the body" (Heine, *Origen*, 38). Therefore, what we find on Origen's discussion of the priesthood most likely represents Origen's original thought. See also, McGuckin, "Priesthood I," 279, for similar conclusions.

For the dating and location of Origen's homilies see Joseph Trigg, *Origen: The Bible and Philosophy in the Third Century Church* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1983), 176; Pierre Nautin, *Origène: sa vie et son oeuvre* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1977), 389–409; and Robert Wilken, "Leviticus as a Book of the Church," *Consensus* 23 (1997): 10.

affirms a variety of priesthoods: the historic priesthood of Christ, the ministerial, or hierarchical, priesthood of the clergy, the priesthood of the body of Christ, the priesthood of the spiritually elite, and a heavenly priesthood.[7] McGuckin also surveys a number of priesthood texts in Origen and argues that the various conceptions of priesthood are often intermingled and intertwined for Origen.[8] Granting this much broader conception and interconnectedness of priesthood in the writings of Origen, the focus of this chapter will be the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood only.[9]

Some scholars have suggested that Origen rarely, if ever, makes the connection between the official ecclesial office and the term "priest." Theo Hermans, for example, argues that "Origen only rarely designates the Christian who has received the sacerdotal ordination by the term *hiereus*."[10] Likewise, Robert Daly argues that in Origen's homilies, "There is no mention of the office of a class of specially ordained hierarchical Christian priests."[11] Finally, Joseph Trigg draws similar conclusions, averring "Unquestionably, Origen did not identify priests with the existing officials of the church."[12] Contrary to such opinions, I will demonstrate that Origen makes a connection between official Christian leadership and Levitical priesthood in numerous passages.

To begin, one does not find Origen's link between bishop and priest by locating discussions on the bishop per se. Rather, by examining Origen's treatment of the Levitical priesthood, one discovers the continuities he perceives between the two offices. Two important passages from his *Homilies on Leviticus*

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7 Vilela, *La condition collegiale*, 56.

8 McGuckin, "Priesthood I," 277. Also, Joseph Lecuyer argues similarly that ministerial priesthood and the priesthood of Christ are closely related ("Sacerdoce des fidèles et sacerdoce ministériel chez Origène," *Vetera Christianorum* 7 [1970]: 254).

9 It is important to note that for Origen there is no conflict in simultaneously affirming a hierarchical priesthood, the priesthood of Christ, and the priesthood of the church. Those in our modern era who assume such a contradiction should take special note that Origen, like the early church in general, held various aspects of Christian priesthood in one coherent whole. John McGuckin helpfully explains these differences (and non-contradictory coherence) in priesthood: "the priesthood of ministers and people is not different in essence but in function…" ("Priesthood I," 278).

10 "Origène désigne, mais rarement, par *hiereus* le chrétien qui a reçu l'ordination sacerdotale." Theo Hermans, *Origène: théologie sacrificielle du sacerdoce des chrétiens* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1996), 20.

11 Robert Daly, "Sacrificial Soteriology in Origen's Homilies on Leviticus," *Studia Patristica* 17.2 (1982): 875.

12 Trigg, *Origen: Bible and Philosophy*, 142.

make this connection clear. In light of the public ordination of Old Testament priests as prescribed in Leviticus 8:4–5, Origen explains:

> For in ordaining a priest (*sacerdote*), the presence of the people is also required in order that all may know and be certain why one who is more excellent, more learned, more holy, and more prominent in all virtue is chosen for the priesthood (*sacerdotium*) from among all the people, lest afterward, when he stands in the presence of the people, any objection or doubt remain. For this is what the apostle also teaches regarding the ordination of a priest (*sacerdotis*), saying 'For it is proper to have a good testimony from these who are outside' (1 Tim. 3:7).[13]

In this text, Origen explains the reason God requires a public ordination of the priest (*sacerdos*) as mandated in the book of Leviticus. Though these chosen men are superior in virtue, they are ordained publicly lest some doubt or denial remain as to their appointment. Origen then moves seamlessly from a discussion of the Levitical priesthood to the Christian ministry by citing 1 Timothy 3:7, "For it is proper to have a good testimony from those who are outside." The importance of this citation lies in the observation that 1 Timothy 3 delineates the qualifications for the Christian bishop (*episcopus*). The tie between bishop and priest is made explicit by Origen; he grounds his Christian application of the Old Testament Levitical prescription by turning to the New Testament, saying "the apostle also teaches regarding the ordination of a *priest*."[14] The teaching of the apostle of which Origen speaks is the qualification for the office of bishop. For Origen, then, the office of bishop in the New Testament has correspondence with the Levitical priesthood of the Old Testament such that an Old Testament text on the priesthood is understood to refer to the Christian bishop.

A second text in which Origen draws this link is his seventh homily on Leviticus. Here Origen notes that Leviticus 9:7 commands priests who approach the altar to abstain from strong drink. Origen explains: "Therefore he wants those, to whom the Lord himself is their portion, to be sober (*sobrios*), fasting, and vigilant at all times, especially when they are present at the altar to pray to the Lord and to offer sacrifice (*sacrificandum*) in his sight." These commands hold for the church as well, avers Origen, since "the apostle asserts these same things in the laws of the New Testament. For in a similar way,

13 *Hom. Lev.* 6.3, *SC* 286: 278.

14 Origen, like the rest of the early church, took the Apostle Paul as the author of the pastoral epistles.

he himself, setting up the rules of life for the priests (*sacerdotibus*) or chief priests (*principibus sacerdotum*), says 'they ought not to be enslaved to much wine, but ought to be sober (*sobrios*)' (1 Tim.3:3)."[15] Again, Origen makes explicit his bishop-as-priest paradigm by comparing the commands for the priests in Leviticus with the qualifications for bishops in 1 Tim. 3:3. Where Old Testament priests are commanded to be sober, so New Testament bishops (as *sacerdotes*) receive similar instruction about the need for sobriety.[16] For Origen, then, when the apostle speaks about the qualifications for bishop, he is speaking about a Christian ministerial "priesthood," and when Origen reads the Levitical prescriptions in the Old Testament, he unquestionably applies them to the Christian ministry.

Similar connections can be found in Origen's homilies on the books of Numbers and Joshua. Discussing the text in Numbers 2:2 which commands the Israelites to "encamp each by his own standard, with the ensigns of their father's house," Origen interprets it as a prescription for order (*ordo*) within the church (even while warning against overly idealizing the clergy in the church):

> Do you think that those who discharge the office of the priesthood (*sacerdotio*) and glory in the sacerdotal order (*sacerdotali ordine*) march according to their order (*ordinem*) and do everything which is worthy of that rank? The same goes for deacons; do you think they march according to the order of their ministry? How often do people blaspheme and say: 'Behold, what a bishop! what a presbyter! what a deacon!' Is this not said when a priest (*sacerdos*) or minister of God is seen violating his order and acting against the priestly or levitical rank (*sacerdotalem vel leviticum ordinem*)?… If they fail in decency and discretion and behave impudently, will not Moses accuse them at once and say: "Let a man march according to his order" (Num. 2:2–4)?[17]

Here Origen clearly has in mind the bishop (and presbyter) as the *sacerdotes*, those who fill the *sacerdotalis ordo*, reminding them of and calling them back to the dignity of their office. While also chastising those unworthy of their office, Origen nevertheless affirms their rank as a *sacerdotalis ordo*.

In a later homily on Numbers 18:8, in which God commands the offerings of the people to be given to the priests "as a portion, and to your sons as

15 *Hom. Lev.* 7.1, SC 287: 300.

16 Likewise, Titus 1:7–8 speaks of sobriety (*sobrium*) as a necessary prerequisite for the office of bishop, a passage Origen doubtless has in mind as he exegetes this Leviticus text.

17 *Hom. Num.* 2.1.4, SC 415: 58–60.

a perpetual due," Origen again makes explicit application to the Christian ministerial leadership:

> This passage which we have in our hands, it seems to me, invites the interpretation that it is also right and useful to offer first-fruits to the priests of the gospel (*sacerdotibus Evangelii*). For thus the Lord arranged that those who proclaim the gospel live from the gospel, and those who serve the altar participate in the altar (cp. 1 Cor 9:13)—this is right and decent. And for this reason, it is contrary, indecent and unworthy, even impious, that one who worships God and enters into the church of God, who knows that the priests (*sacerdotes*) and ministers stand by the altar and serve either in the Word of God or in the ministry of the church, should not offer to the priests (*sacerdotibus*) the first-fruits from the produce of the earth which God gave by bringing forth his sun and by providing his rains…[18]

Like nearly all early Christians, Origen reads the Old Testament with one foot in the New, so to speak. As Schäfer explains, "Since the priest—like the Levites of the Old Testament—should be dedicated entirely to the service of God, Origen demands that [Christian priests] be provided for materially by the laity… Whoever proclaims the gospel should live from the gospel, and whoever serves the altar should also receive his share from it."[19] Once again, Origen understands the Old Testament text in light of its relevant application in the New, including the obvious continuity between priestly and episcopal leadership.

In a homily on Joshua 3, Origen discusses the Israelite crossing of the Jordan River. He addresses his Christian congregation with this striking application: "Do not be amazed when these things concerning the former people are applied to you. To you, O Christian, who have passed through the Jordan river through the sacrament of baptism, the divine word promises much greater and loftier things." Origen then connects Old Testament priesthood with current Christian leadership by reminding his audience that "if indeed you have come to the mystic font of baptism and in the presence of the priestly and Levitical order (*sacerdotali et Levitico ordine*) have been admitted to those venerable and magnificent sacraments… then, with the Jordan crossed, you will enter the land of promise by the services of the priests (*sacerdotum ministeriis*)."[20]

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18 *Hom. Num.* 11.2.2, *SC* 442: 22–24.

19 "Da die Priester – wie die Leviten des Alten Testaments – sich ganz dem Dienst Gottes widmen sollen, verlangt Origenes, dass sie von den Laien materiell versorgt warden... Wer nämlich das Evangelium verkündet, soll vom Evangelium leben, und wer dem Altar dient, soll auch seinen Anteil davon empfangen." Schäfer, *Priester-Bild*, 52–53.

20 *Hom. Jos.* 4.1, *SC* 71: 146–148.

While Origen does not name the bishop or presbyter explicitly, the liturgical reference to baptism and the sacraments undoubtedly indicates the ministerial leadership of the church. Just as "the former people" were led into the land by the priests, so too the Christian people "enter the land of promise by the services of the priests." The Christian leaders, implies Origen, are the "priestly and Levitical order" for the Christian people.[21] Having sufficiently demonstrated that Origen does consciously designate the Christian minister as a priest, and that this Christian priesthood is informed by the model of the Old Testament priesthood, I shall briefly address the various functions of Christian leaders which Origen connects to such "priestly" duties.

Functions of the Minister-Priest

Teaching

First and foremost for Origen, the main task of the minister-priest is teaching. Repeatedly throughout his scriptural expositions, Origen highlights the duty of instruction as particularly important for Christian leadership. As Bulley observes, "The main priestly task, for Origen, was undoubtedly that of studying the word and teaching the people."[22] Given Origen's own obvious gifts and interest in the task of biblical exposition, it should come as no surprise that he identifies teaching as an important task for the Christian leader.

Yet Origen explicitly links this instructional task with fulfillment of priestly duties. In Homily 4.2 on Joshua, Origen describes the role of the priests and Levites as ones who "show the way to the people of God" and "stand by the ark of the covenant of the Lord… in order to enlighten (*illuminent*) the people from the commandments of God just as the prophet

21 Lest one thinks these Latin translations represent only emendations from later Christian tradition, we need turn only to Origen's homilies on Jeremiah, extant in Greek, to show the bishop-*hiereus* connection is original with Origen. *Hom Jer*. 11.3; 12.3; 13.13: all equate Old Testament priesthood (*hiereus*) with Christian ministry. Hermann Josef Vogt makes similar conclusions as well (*Das Kirchenverständnis des Origenes* (Koln: Bohlau, 1974), 43; see also Colin Bulley who likewise concludes "Origen himself had used *hiereus*, and it is not an addition of [later Christians], reflecting practice in their own, later day" (*The Priesthood of Some Believers: Developments from the General to the Special Priesthood in the Christian Literature of the First Three Centuries* [Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster, 2000], 98).

22 Bulley, *Priesthood*, 107.

says: 'Your word is a lamp to my feet, O Lord, and a light to my paths.' This light is kindled through the priests (*sacerdotes*) and Levites."[23] Here Origen portrays one of the primary functions of the priest as that of a teacher of Scripture.

In a later homily on Joshua, Origen again connects the teaching duty of Christian leaders with those same tasks and requirements for priests in the Old Testament. In a discussion of the distribution of the land, Origen observes that the Levites received no land as a heritage. Yet, they are not without earthly support, for the Israelites must care for their priests. Origen explains the contemporary application:

> Thus, now also, the Levite and the priest who do not possess the land are commanded to live with the Israelite, who does possess the land, in order that the priest and Levite might receive from the Israelite earthly things which the priest does not have. In turn the Israelite might receive from the priest and Levite heavenly and divine things which the Israelite does not have. For the law of God (*lex Dei*) was entrusted to the priests (*sacerdotibus*) and Levites in order that they might attend to this work alone and be free from any concern except for the word of God (*verbo Dei*).[24]

In this passage Origen states the primary duty of the minister-priests: they are to teach the law of God. It was explicitly entrusted to them and must occupy their entire attention. As Daniélou aptly summarizes, for Origen "The role of the [Christian] priest is to analyze the letter, to distinguish in Scripture the different aspects of the Logos… Thus, the completion of the Levitical priesthood is the ministry of the word. The one was a figure, the other is the reality."[25] For Origen, the bishop-priest is above all a teacher of the Word.

The Old Testament itself likewise presents the priest as a teacher of the law. In Deuteronomy 33:10, for example, Moses pronounces a blessing upon Levi and his sons, saying, "They shall teach (*dēlōsousin*) Jacob thine ordinances and Israel thy law (*ton nomon sou*); they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt offerings upon thine altar." While the latter half of the blessing mentions sacrifice, a task more commonly associated with the priesthood,

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23 *Hom. Jos.* 4.2, *SC* 71: 152–154. See also *Hom. Lev.* 6.6 where Origen asserts that the two main tasks of the high priest are to either "learn something from God or teach the people" (*SC* 286: 294).

24 *Hom. Jos.* 17.3, *SC* 71: 378–380.

25 "Le rôle du prêtre est d'analyser la letter, de distinguer dans l'Écriture les différents aspects du Logos... Ainsi, l'accomplissement du sacerdoce lévitique, c'est le ministrère de la parole. Celui-là était la figure, celui-ci est la réalité." Daniélou, *Origène, le génie,* 59.

the duty of teaching is given a promint place, being mentioned first in the list of priestly duties.[26]

Likewise, after the Assyrians had conquered Israel and placed foreigners in the land of Samaria, the king of Assyria commanded the captive Israelites: "Send [to Samaria] one of the priests… and let him go and dwell there, and *teach* the foreigners the law of the god of the land" (2 Kgs 17:27–28). Further, 2 Chronicles 15:3 describes the spiritual decline of Judah as being "without the true God and without a *teaching* priest and without the law,"[27] while the prophetical books repeatedly chastise the priests for their failure to "handle the law" properly (cf. Jer. 2:8). Instead, the priests are accused of "teaching for hire" (Mic. 3:11) and letting the law perish in the land (Ezek. 7:26). Because they have "forgotten the law of God," God announces through Hosea, "I reject you from being a priest to me" (Hos. 4:6).

There is, then, biblical precedent for understanding the priest as one associated with teaching and the law, and it appears that Origen draws upon this rich tradition in his understanding of the bishop's teaching duty as a "priestly" one. However, Origen does not look to the Old Testament priesthood in order to determine *what* the Christian bishop should do; rather, his understanding of the bishop as a "priest" derives in part from the correspondence he sees already existing between the episcopal practice of teaching and the same responsibility given to the priests of Israel. One of the important tasks of the Christian bishop was to teach; the correspondence Origen sees between the episcopal and Levitical tasks of teaching enables him to designate the Christian bishop a "priest."[28]

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26 See also Louis Leloir, "Permanent Values of the Levitical Priesthood," in *The Sacrament of Holy Orders: Some papers and discussions concerning holy order at a session of the Centre de Pastorale Liturgique, 1955* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1962), 50–52.

27 See also 2 Kgs 12:2 for a similar idea.

28 This raises another important observation about Origen's attachment to the bishop-as-*priest* model. Joseph Trigg has argued that Origen uses the *sacerdos/hiereus* language as a polemic against the current holders of ecclesiastical office with whom he is at odds. Trigg suggests that the priestly model "gave [Origen] a way to oppose the pretensions of official authority, which was rapidly appropriating these very symbols [i.e. priesthood] to legitimate episcopal authority" ("The Charismatic Intellectual: Origen's Understanding of Religious Leadership," *Church History* 50 [1981]:12). Further, Trigg argues that while the ecclesiastical leaders were portraying themselves as paralleling the Levitical priesthood in their role as mediator, "Origen, on the other hand... developed a radically 'charismatic' ideology of religious authority with which to confront the 'official' ideology of the bishops" (7). While

Sacrifice

In addition to instructional duties, Origen delineates another important priestly function, namely, presiding over the sacrifices. In his homily on Leviticus 4.3, speaking about prescriptions for when a high priest sins, Origen asks: "Who is the high priest (*pontifex*)? He who was anointed, who ignites the divine altars with holy fires, who sacrifices (*immolat*) to God gifts and salutary victims, and who intervenes between God and humans as a certain middle propitiator."[29] Here, Origen identifies an additional task of the priest (presumably the Old Testament priest) as one who offers sacrifice to God. The priest is not solely a teacher, but also the one who presides over the sacrifices.[30]

Origen describes similar priestly tasks in Homily 7 on Leviticus, but there he also connects it to the Christian bishop. He explains that the Lord desires bishops "to be sober, fasting, vigilant at all times, but especially when they are present at the altars (*altaribus*) to entreat the Lord and to offer sacrifice (*sacrificandum*) in his sight."[31] Bishop-priests are expected, in Origen's view, to tend to the altar of the Lord, praying and offering sacrifices before him. Theo Schäfer's observations ring true: "One leading task for the priests of the

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Trigg's insights into Origen's tension with church leadership may play a part in Origen's conceptions about the bishop, Trigg himself notes that in comparing Origen's earlier works with his later works in Caesarea, Origen's "understanding of religious authority was already well formed by the time he settled at Caesarea" (*Origen: Bible and Philosophy*, 141). If Origen was in tension with the religious leadership and their misappropriation of the priestly title, and instead wanted to emphasize the bishop's charismatic preaching of the Word, why did Origen not develop an understanding of the bishop based on a prophetical, not priestly, model? In other words, the ecclesiastical tensions do not explain sufficiently why Origen connects the *priestly* model of leadership to the Christian bishop. If the primary role of the bishop is to study and teach the divine word, in what way does that task make him a priest? I hope that my discussion above has provided an answer to why Origen makes the connection to priesthood: he sees a correspondence between the actual tasks and practice of Christian bishops and the practice and task of Old Testament priests as teachers of the law. However, the other functions Origen ascribes to bishops (discussed below) also play an important role in his connection to Old Testament priests. Thus, it seems to me that Origen was not using the designation as an ecclesiastical attack, but rather more fully developing the notion of bishop-as-priest along more robust ecclesiological/typological lines (a point I will develop further below).

29 *Hom. Lev.* 2.3, *SC* 286: 100.

30 Origen also indicates the task of mediator, but this is not developed further by Origen in his application to Christian priesthood.

31 *Hom. Lev.* 7.1, *SC* 286: 300.

Old Testament came above all through their service in offering the sacrifice. One such administrative task for the priests of the church also came through their service at the altar. Yet, there was understood here by 'altar' something different than in the Old Testament."[32] What, then, are these sacrifices the Christian bishop must present to God?

One might expect that the sacrifice of which Origen speaks is the Eucharist. By Origen's day, the portrayal of the Eucharist in sacrificial terms was well-established. It was a universally-received notion that the Eucharist was in some sense a "sacrifice" connected with an altar.[33] Although Origen does have a few passing references to the Eucharist in sacrificial terms,[34] it is certainly not central to his reading of the Old Testament sacrifices, or explicitly related to the Christian minister being called a priest. In fact, as will be shown, the bishop's presidency over the Eucharistic rite, while certainly assumed and accepted, is rarely what Origen explicitly refers to when he speaks of the bishop's role in offering the "sacrifices" of the church. As McGuckin

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32 "Den Priestern des Alten Testamentes kam vor allem durch ihren Dienst bei der Darbringung der Opfer eine führende Stellung zu. Auch den Priestern der Kirche kommt eine solche Leitungsaufgabe aufgrund ihres Dienstes am Altar zu. Doch ist hier unter dem Altar etwas anderes verstanden als im Alten Testamnent." Schäfer, *Priester-Bild*, 90.

33 The pertinent early church texts on the Eucharist in connection with sacrifice and an altar include: *Didache* 14; Ignatius of Antioch, *Philadelphians* 4 and *Ephesians* 5.2; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 41.1–3, 117.1–3; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* IV 17.5, 18.1–6; Tertullian, *Exh. Cast.* 10.5; 11; Hippolytus, *AT* 4.11–12; and Cyprian, *Epistle* 63. See also Robert Daly, *Christian Sacrifice: The Judaeo-Christian Background before Origen* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic U.P., 1978), 498–508.

34 For example, *Hom. Lev.* 13.3 exposits Lev. 24:5–9 and speaks of the showbread of the Tabernacle placed before the Lord. Origen connects the bread of the Old Testament with the "bread from heaven" celebrated in the "ecclesiastical mysteries" (*ecclesisatica mysteria*)—which most likely included the Eucharist (SC 287: 208).

In *Hom. Jos.* 2.1, Origen makes the point that there are no longer altars with the blood of animals; they have been replaced with altars with the blood of Christ, suggesting a conception of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. At opposite ends of the spectrum are LaPorte who argues perhaps too strongly that much of Origen's teaching on sacrifice and priesthood is "Eucharistic" and Vogt who says that Origen *never* describes the Eucharist as a sacrifice (Jean Laporte, "Sacrifice in Origen in the Light of Philonic Models," in *Origen of Alexandria: His World and His Legacy*, eds. Charles Kannengiesser and William L. Petersen [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988], 258 and Vogt, *Kirchenverständnis*, 42). Somewhere in the middle is most likely the correct view. While Origen does not seem to reject such a notion, the Eucharist as sacrifice rarely plays an important role in his thinking on either sacrifice or the Eucharist.

explains, "There is no thought here of the Christian priest, cleric or otherwise, offering the sacrifice of Christ, either in the Eucharist or in any other way…"[35] To understand Origen's portrayal of the bishop as one who offers sacrifice, we must look elsewhere.

The Word as a Sacrifice

What, then, is the Christian sacrifice in connection with the bishop-priest, according to Origen? For him, the sacrifice connected with the bishop-priest is the pastoral task regarding the ministry of the Word. In other words, the bishop is a "priest" who presides over Christian sacrifice, but that sacrifice is cast primarily as the preaching of the Word. He is unequivocal about this view in his fifth sermon on Leviticus where he describes the priest as one who "kills the sacrifice (*hostiam*) of the Word of God (*verbi Dei*) and offers the sacrifices (*victimas*) of sound doctrine."[36] The Word of God and sound doctrine are, in Origen's view, the sacrifices which the Christian priest offers.

Later in the same homily on Leviticus, Origen enters a discussion about the instructions for the peace offering, which must be eaten on the day it was offered and not be left over for another day. He declares: "Hear these things, all you priests (*sacerdotes*) of the Lord and understand attentively what is said. The flesh which is counted to the priests (*sacerdotibus*) from the sacrifices (*sacrificiis*) is the word of God (*verbum Dei*) which they teach in the church." Specifically, Origen has in mind the spiritual interpretation of the Word, since "through the grace of God, they [priests] always offer new things, and always discover spiritual things."[37] McGuckin comments that Origen finds "the essential nature of his priesthood in this 'sacrifice of the word' which he offers in addressing wisdom to the people and reconciling them to God."[38] According to Origen, the sacrifice of the priest is the Word of God rightly interpreted and explained.

In another homily, Origen expounds Leviticus 1:6–9 wherein the priests are commanded to remove the skin of the sacrificial animal. Understood spiritually, Origen suggests that the priest who performs this function is the one

35 McGuckin, "Priesthood I," 284. See also Bulley, *Priesthood*, 109, who arrives at similar conclusions.

36 *Hom. Lev.* 5.3, *SC* 286: 220.

37 Both quotes are from *Hom. Lev.* 5.8, *SC* 286: 242.

38 John McGuckin, "Origen's Doctrine of Priesthood II," *Clergy Review* 70 n.9 (1985): 322.

who can "remove the veil of the letter," revealing the spiritual understanding of the divine word. By so doing, the priest "arranges it upon the altar (*altare*) when he discloses the divine mysteries, not to unworthy people who are leading a base and earthly life, but to those who are the altar of God, in which the divine fire always burns and flesh is always consumed."[39] Revealing the spiritual understanding of the text, says Origen, constitutes the responsibility of the minister-priest, and in performance of this duty, Origen likens the work of the preacher to the Levitical priest. By disclosing the spiritual understanding of scripture, the minister has "placed it upon the altar." The Word of God is a sacrifice, offered by the Christian minister who presides over it.

Finally, in a text seen previously, Origen succinctly summarizes the Christian ministerial task: "the priests (*sacerdotes*) and ministers stand by the altar and serve either the Word of God (*verbo Dei*) or the ministry of the church."[40] The Christian minister parallels the Levitical priesthood expressly in his role as the one who presides over the sacrifice of the Word of God. For Origen, the Christian minister's instructional duty, cast in the mold of a sacrifice, is in large part what makes his ministry priestly.

We see, then, that Origen draws strong continuities both between Israelite and Christian worship and between Israelite and Christian priesthood. Given the functions of the bishop in his role as teacher and as the one who "offers sacrifice in God's sight," the connections with the Levitical priesthood become clear. The one who presided over the old covenant sacrifices (the Old Testament priest offering animal sacrifice) is now paralleled by the Christian minister who presides over the new covenant sacrifices—the offering the Word of God.

Before moving on to a third function Origen identifies with the bishop-priest's office, it should be noted the particular lack of reference to the Eucharistic sacrifice in connection with a Christian ministerial priesthood for Origen. That is, while Origen does in fact tie priesthood to sacrifice, the sacrifice Origen has in mind is the preaching and teaching of the word of God, *not* the Eucharistic sacrifice. Thus, once again, the common scholarly consensus that connects the rise of a Christian ministerial priesthood to the bishop's role in offering the Eucharistic sacrifice, is proven an inadequate explanation. For Origen, the Eucharistic sacrifice seems to play little to no role at all in his understanding of the Christian minister as a priest.

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39 *Hom. Lev.* 1.4, SC 286: 80.

40 *Hom. Num.*11.2, SC 442: 24.

Spiritual Leadership

One final aspect of the bishop-priest's role which Origen describes is the more general responsibility of spiritual leadership and governance. As Hans von Campenhausen observes, "Origen sees the task of the bishop as one comprising the leadership and government of his community, especially in the work of administering justice and the regular administration of penance."[41] We have already seen that for Origen the bishop is like the priests of old in presiding over the church's worship, including preaching and sacramental rites like baptism; this is the more cultic side of the bishop-priest's role. Yet, Origen speaks also in more general terms about the task of governance and ruling, a spiritual guardianship, of the people of God. For example, in discussing the leadership of Moses and his council, Origen makes application to his own contemporary context and calls upon the current leaders, "who rule over the people (*qui populis praesunt*),"[42] to be wise students of the word of God, appropriating even pagan wisdom if it is true. Although Christian leadership may have several different tasks, Origen summarizes their role in the church here in broad terms as "those who rule over the people."

In another homily on Leviticus, Origen makes a similar summary of the bishop's role, yet also connects it to the priestly model in the Old Testament. In discussing the Levitical prescription that a portion of the offerings belongs to the priests, Origen applies this teaching to his present situation: "Let the priests of the Lord (*sacerdotes Domini*) who rule over the churches (*qui Ecclesiis praesunt*) learn that part [of the sacrifice] was given to them…"[43] He doubtless refers to the official Christian leadership, indicating that their role as ones "who rule over the churches" is part of their task as *sacerdotes Domini*. The spiritual leadership and authority of Christian bishops echoes for Origen the spiritual leadership and authority of Old Testament priests.

Again, in his homily on Joshua 6–7 regarding the conquest of Jericho and subsequent sin of Achan, Origen addresses the task of admonishing sinners, averring that the duty lies upon "the priests who rule over the people

41 "Sieht auch Origenes die Aufgabe des Bischofs in einem umfassenden Führen und „Regieren" seiner Gemeinde, besonders in der Arbeit der Rechtsprechung und der regelmässigen Verwaltung der Busse." Hans von Campenhausen, *Kirchliches Amt und geistliche Vollmacht in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Tübigen: Mohr, 1963), 276.

42 *Hom. Exod.* 11.6, *SC* 321: 346.

43 *Hom. Lev.* 5.4.4, *SC* 286: 224.

(*qui populo praesunt*)." Later in this same passage, Origen links the Levitical priests to Christian ministers by describing them as "those who rule over the churches (*Ecclesiis praesunt*)."[44] Just as the spiritual welfare of the people of Israel was the responsibility of the Israelite priests, so now, implies Origen, the spiritual welfare of the Christian people of God lies in the hands of the bishop-priests.

Finally, in Homily 10 on Numbers, Origen describes the Christian leaders as those "in the sacerdotal order (*in ordine sacerdotali*)." Their task, reminds Origen, like those of the Israelite priests, is to "guard (*custodias*) the Tabernacle, the altar and the priesthood."[45] Just as the Israelite priests were called to guard God's house,[46] so too the Christian ministers retain this governmental and custodial priestly duty.

As with the tasks of teaching and sacrifice, the biblical portrait of priestly responsibilities also includes that of spiritual leadership and authority. In general terms, the priests of the Old Testament are repeatedly assigned the task of maintaining the spiritual welfare of the people such that when Israel experiences a spiritual decline, the priests are held responsible. In 2 Chronicles 15:3, the prophet Azariah explains to king Asa: "For a long time Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest and without law." Later in Ezekiel 44:12, the priests are condemned as those who "became a stumbling block of iniquity to the house of Israel" because they induced the people to idol worship. As a result, the Lord declares that the priests "shall bear their punishment." Further, in a scathing pronouncement by Hosea, God declares that his contention is with the priests who have failed their spiritual duties, causing the people to stumble. As a result, says the Lord, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children" (4:6). Texts such as these demonstrate that the priests of Israel were responsible for the spiritual leadership of the

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44 *Hom. Jos.* 7.6, SC 71: 208, 210.

45 *Hom. Numb.* 10.3.1, SC 415: 284. He's citing from Numbers 18:2–4, 7 which admonishes the Levitical priests: "*excubent in custodiis tabernaculi et in omnibus caerimoniis*" (18:4) and "*tu autem et filii tui custodite sacerdotium vestrum et omnia quae ad cultum altaris pertinent*" (18:7).

46 See Peter Leithart, "Attendants of Yahweh's House: Priesthood in the Old Testament," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 85 (1999): 3–24, and my previous discussion of his thesis, chapter 3.

people such that a failure on the part of the priesthood resulted in spiritual disaster and rejection on the part of the people. As Hosea cries in the same context: "And it shall be like people, like priest" (4:9).

Moreover, Old Testament priests are portrayed as those not only with spiritual responsibility, but with spiritual authority over the people of Israel. It is the priest to whom an Israelite must go to receive determinations and pronouncements about clean and unclean skin, clothing, and furniture (cf. Leviticus 13:3–35). Likewise, the priests hold the authority in the land as judges in matters of dispute. Deuteronomy 17:8–11 commands:

> If any case arises requiring decision between one kind of homicide and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another, any case within your towns that is too difficult for you, then you shall arise and go up to the place that the LORD your God will choose. And you shall come to the Levitical priests and to the judge who is in office in those days, and you shall consult them, and they shall declare to you the decision… You shall not turn aside from the verdict that they declare to you, either to the right hand or to the left.

So great is the authority of the priest that the text declares, "The man who acts presumptuously by not obeying the priest who stands to minister there before the LORD your God, or the judge, that man shall die" (17:12).[47]

These passages make it clear that the Israelite priest was one entrusted with the spiritual and judicial care for and authority over the people of God. They were to lead and govern the people faithfully, ensuring their spiritual well-being. Given this biblical emphasis on priestly spiritual leadership, it is not unusual that Origen, likewise, allows this biblical picture of priestly leadership to shape his portrayal and understanding of Christian leadership. Yet notice that Origen also allows the episcopal office itself to stretch the Old Testament priestly model in order to fit current Christian practice. The Old Testament priests' responsibilities for liturgy, teaching, and spiritual leadership are applied to the Christian bishop, and from this perspective Origen is simply drawing upon the biblical model as a way of understanding Christian leadership. However, he also allows the more liturgical and sacrificial functions of the Old Testament priest to recede into the background while highlighting the tasks of teaching and leadership so as to match the responsibilities of bishops in his own day. Thus the influences go both ways. The Old Testament model shapes his understanding of the bishop as a priest, while current episcopal

47 See again Leloir, "Permanent Values," 52, for a brief discussion of this priestly function.

practices and responsibilities influence Origen's reading and specific application of priestly texts to Christian leadership.

Given this broader portrayal of the minister-priest as one who is responsible for the spiritual leadership of the church, Theo Hermans is partly correct to suggest that "Origen continues to envisage the priest as a man who maintains the worship of God."[48] Like the Levitical priests of old, the Christian bishops participate in the cultic service as they "stand by the altar and serve the Word of God,"[49] "pray to the Lord and offer sacrifice in his sight,"[50] and "rule over the church."[51] Yet it is important to reiterate that this cultic priestly duty is rarely in explicit connection with the Eucharist as a sacrifice. The Eucharistic sacrifice remains in the background to be sure, but it rarely receives overt reference when Origen speaks of the minister's priestly duties. Rather, the broader portrayal of the bishop-priest is as one responsible for the spiritual well-being of the people of God, in charge of preaching and worship in general. Like the Old Testament priests who governed and guarded Israelite worship, the Christian bishop also assumes the responsibility for governance and guardianship of worship and the spiritual livelihood of the Christian people.

In summary, Origen understands the Christian minister in connection with the Levitical priesthood. He portrays the main functions of the minister, such as teaching, sacrifice, and leadership responsibility, as priestly duties. In particular, the old covenant priestly paradigm is appropriated and applied to the Christian bishop.

What enables Origen to make this connection between Levitical priest and Christian minister? For one thing, this connection between Old Testament priest and Christian minister is becoming a universally affirmed notion. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the church in which Origen finds himself has already begun to appropriate such a model. Thus, Origen, as a *vir ecclesiasticus*, follows suit. This is not, however, the only explanation, for Origen's exegesis also demonstrates what enables him to arrive at such designations: his ecclesiology. In other words, by first appreciating Origen's more institutional and public ecclesiology, one will gain a better appreciation for

48 "Origène continue à envisager le prêtre comme un home qui assure le culte de Dieu." Hermans, *Origène*, 22.

49 *Hom. Num.* 11.2.2, *SC* 442: 24.

50 *Hom. Lev.* 7.1, *SC* 287: 300.

51 *Hom. Jos.* 7.6, *SC* 71: 208, 210.

his connection between the Israelite priesthood and a Christian ministerial priesthood within the church.

Religio-Political Ecclesiology

Church as Polis

The notion of the church as a unique *polis* or "nation" plays a large role in Origen's ecclesiology. For example, in his treatise *Against Celsus*, Origen describes the church of God by making an extended contrast and comparison with other political societies in the Roman world:

> For the church (*ekklēsia*) of God, e.g., which is at Athens, is something gentle and stable, as being one which desires to please the God of all things; but the assembly (*ekklēsia*) of the Athenians is seditious and should by no means be compared to the church (*ekklēsia*) of God there. And you may say the same thing of the church of God at Corinth, and of the assembly of the Corinthian people; and also of the church of God at Alexandria, and of the assembly of the Alexandrian people. And if the one who hears this is reasonable… he will be amazed at the One who planned it and was able to accomplish in all places the establishment of churches (*ekklēsias*) of God alongside of the assemblies of the people in each city.
>
> In the same way, in comparing the council of the church (*boulēn ekklēsias)* of God with the council in each city (*polin*), you would find that some rulers of the church are worthy to govern (*politeusthai*) that city [i.e. the church], if there is any such city of God (*polis tou theou*) in the whole world; but the rulers in all other places do not bear the character worthy of the superiority of rule which they seem to hold over the citizens. And so, too, you must compare the rulers of the assembly of each city (*archonta ekklēsias hekastēs poleōs*) who rule those in the city (*polei*).[52]

Throughout this remarkable passage, Origen makes a running comparison between the church of God (*ekklēsia theou*) and the assembly (*ekklēsia*) of the cities. His conclusion is that the Christian assemblies are far superior to those of the pagan assemblies. That Origen should hold the Christians in such high regard is not unusual; however, his characterization of the church in such political terms is more surprising, and important. The church is not just an *ekklēsia* in an abstract sense, but a concrete social reality—a "city" (*polis*), governed by a ruler. As von Campenhausen observes, "Even for [Origen], the

52 CC 3.30, SC 136: 72.

church, with all the emphasis on its spiritual and super-earthly nature, is also a sacred, sociological reality of an admittedly quasi-political importance."[53] The church is not merely a "spiritual" and invisible reality. Although he would not deny this spiritual aspect of Christianity, Origen here clearly presents the Christian church as a vibrant, visible *polis*, comparable yet superior to the existing secular assemblies in the Empire.[54]

In another revealing passage in *Against Celsus*, Origen touches upon this same notion of the church as a political entity, comparable yet distinct from the Greco-Roman *polis*. Celsus has accused the Christians of failing their political duty to the state by refusing to take office in the government. Origen responds, again, at length:

> But we recognize in each city the existence of another national government (*systema patridos*) founded by the Word of God, and we encourage those who are powerful in word and of a wholesome life to rule over the churches (*ekklēsiōn*)… And those who rule (*archontes*) us well are under the constraining influence of the great King (*tou megalou basileōs*), whom we believe to be the Son of God, the divine Word. And if those who govern (*archontes*) the church rule well, being called rulers of the divine nation (*theon patridos*)—that is, the church—they govern according to the commands of God…
>
> So it is not for the purpose of fleeing public duties that Christians avoid public offices, but that they might reserve themselves for a more divine and more necessary service (*leitourgia*) in the church of God—for the salvation of men.[55]

Similar to his previous explanation, Origen here describes the church as a "national government" complete with rulers and a "great King." The church is likened to a nation, the "divine nation," ruled by divine commands. Christians, explains Origen, are not attempting to escape public duty; rather, their citizenship is of another political realm—the church. As before, Origen clearly portrays the church as a visible, active "nation" or *polis*, existing alongside of and distinct from the secular Greco-Roman Empire.

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53 "Auch für ihn ist ja die Kirche bei aller Betonung ihres spirituellen und überirdischen Wesens immer auch eine heilige, soziologische Gegebenheit von einem zugestandenermassen quasi-politischen Gewicht." von Campenhausen, *Kirchliches Amt,* 289.

54 See Vogt, *Kirchenverständnis*, 80, who asserts that the church, for Origen, is "sehr viel weniger spiritualistisch, als man meinte."

55 *CC* 8.75, *SC* 150: 350–351.

In still other texts, Origen describes the church as the "race of Christians"[56] and a "nation of Christians."[57] From passages such as these, then, Origen's more political ecclesiology becomes clear. While certainly affirming the spiritual and invisible nature of the church elsewhere, Origen here likens the church to a *polis* or nation in itself, unique and distinct from the secular *poleis* of the Empire. The church is understood as a culture unto itself, an alternate society, distinct with its own institutions, rituals, laws, leadership and space in the world.

How does this relate to the Christian priesthood? In part, the Christian priesthood was an expression of the church learning to think of itself as just such an alternate society, containing its own rituals, laws and leadership. More important however, the connection lies in recognizing another important aspect of Origen's ecclesiology: the theological continuity assumed with ancient Israel. When Origen likens the church to a "race" or "divine nation" one must remember that Origen already has a particular "nation" in mind with which the church is linked: biblical Israel. The "race" of Christianity, according to Origen's description of the church, is none other than the *polis* which is built upon and fulfills the Israelite nation of the Old Testament. Thus, Origen articulates not just a political ecclesiology, but a religio-political ecclesiology. The church as *polis*, by Origen's construction, is nothing less than the church as fulfilled and embodied Israel. Albano Vilela explains Origen's ecclesiology this way: "Origen conceives the local church as the city of God… as a theocratic organization, a spiritual reflection of the civil society."[58] However, because the Christian *polis* has its own leaders and rulers, and the Christian *polis* is modeled in part around biblical Israel, it makes perfect sense that the leadership of Israel would become the paradigm which shapes and influences the understanding of Christian leadership. To this connection with biblical Israel I now turn.

Old Testament as the Book of the Church

It is clear very early in the history of Christianity that the Septuagint had become the Christian Scriptures, and in the great struggle for legitimacy

56 *Hom. Jos.* 9.10, *SC* 71: 268.

57 *CC* 1.45.

58 "Origène conçoit aussi l'église locale comme la cité de Dieu... comme une organisation théocratique, un reflet spiritualisé de la société civile." Vilela, *La condition collegiale*, 103.

between Jews and Christians, those texts remained central. As Paul Blowers puts it, "Christian-Jewish confrontations in this period were therefore more than trivial or bookish disputes over the scriptures; they were genuine struggles for credibility."[59] Early Christians readily quote from and interpret the meaning of what came to be known as the Old Testament. Origen is no exception; like the tradition before him, he sees a strong continuity between the biblical testaments: the Old Testament was now the book of the church.

This applies no less to the cultic prescriptions and institutions found throughout the Old Testament. As Origen says in one of his sermons on Leviticus, "Every single thing which is written in the law is a figure (*formae*) of the things which ought to be carried on in the church. Otherwise, these (laws) would not have been necessary to be read in the church, unless some edification from them might be rendered to the hearers."[60] As Daniélou observes, for Origen the Bible was more than academic study. It was "a word which God addresses to us today."[61] In another homily on Leviticus, Origen asserts that Moses revealed future mysteries (i.e. things about the church) "in symbols, figures, and allegorical forms" (*in symbolis et figuris ac formis allegoricis*).[62] In other words, just like the more obviously Christologically-laden books of Psalms, Isaiah, or Deuteronomy, even the book of Leviticus was a book of the church. As Robert Wilken observes, "Christians claimed that they were rightful inheritors of the patrimony of Israel and believed that they were faithful to this inheritance. At the same time, Christians knew they were not the same as Jews and had to demonstrate not only their faithfulness to the Old Testament but also the new import of their teaching…"[63] How this was done, however, was not always an easy task. As Wilken again suggests, commenting particularly on the destruction of the Temple, "Neither Jewish nor Christian interpreters could apply the text [of Leviticus] to the present life of the community without adjustments and adaptations to the changed circumstances in

59 Paul Blowers, "Origen, the Rabbis and the Bible: Toward a Picture of Judaism and Christianity in Third-Century Caesarea," in *Origen of Alexandria: His World and His Legacy*, eds. Charles Kannengiesser and William L. Petersen (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 109.

60 *Hom. Lev.* 5.12, SC 286: 260.

61 "… une parole que Dieu nous adresse aujourd'hui." Jean Daniélou, "Origène comme exégète de la Bible," *Studia Patristica* 1 (1955): 286.

62 *Hom. Lev.* 10.1, SC 287: 128.

63 Robert Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind: a study of Cyril of Alexandria's exegesis and theology* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1971), 16.

which the book was read."[64] Thus, how would Old Testament institutions and commands to Israel now be applicable to the church? Or, as Marcel Simon inquires, "How could they claim as their Bible what they simultaneously empty of its content?"[65] A popular and successful solution provided by Origen and others was to read the Bible not by the "letter," but by the "spirit." A spiritual, or typological, interpretation of the Bible was, for many early Christians, the key to understanding its deeper meaning for the church.[66]

Continuity with Israel and Its History

A typological hermeneutic meant understanding the relationship between Israel and the church in a typological way as well. N.R.M. de Lange comments that "for Origen the ancient history of Israel was also the ancient history of the church, since the church is now the true Israel."[67] In his commentary on Joshua, Origen discusses the Israelites' destructive campaign against the Canaanites, employing a spiritual interpretation to arrive at its contemporary meaning. Just as the nation of Israel was called upon to fight a carnal battle, so now the church is called to wage a war against the spiritual adversaries of the soul. He explains further: "And from the nations which visibly besieged carnal Israel, we may carefully consider how many 'nations' there are opposed to virtue from among the spiritual realm, which are called 'spiritual forces of evil in the heavens' (Eph. 6:12). They stir up wars against the church of the Lord (*ecclesiam Domini*), which is the true Israel (*verus Istrahel*)."[68] The Israelite

64 Robert Wilken, "Origen's Homilies on Leviticus and Vayikra Rabbah," in *Origeniana Sexta*, eds. Gilles Dorival and Alain Le Boulluec (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1995), 88. Also in Robert Wilken, "Leviticus," 15.

65 "Comment donc peuvent-ils réclamer comme leur une Bible que simultanément ils vident de son contenu?" Marcel Simon, *Verus Israel: Étude sur les relations entre chrétiens et juifs dans l'empire romain* (135–425), (Paris: Editions E. de Boccard, 1964), 95.

66 E.g. see Caroline P. Bammel, "Law and Temple in Origen," in *Templum Amicitiae: Essays on the Second Temple presented to Ernst Bammel*, ed. William Horbury (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 474–75, who addresses the spiritual reading of Origen in light of the ecclesiological issues of his day.

Note also *De Princ.*, IV.2.4; IV.3.1, 4–7, for Origen's treatment of his three-fold interpretation and the spiritual Israel.

67 N.R.M. de Lange, *Origen and the Jews: studies in Jewish-Christian relations in third-century Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1976), 64.

68 *Hom. Jos.* 15.1, *SC* 71: 330–332.

wars found in the Old Testament are interpreted by means of re-reading the text in a new way: Israel typifies the church; the war in Canaan signifies the Christian battle against vice.

In his commentary on the Gospel of John, Origen again demonstrates an ecclesiological and typological hermeneutic. Comparing the church with Israel, Origen opines:

> I think that the first ancient people who were called by God were divided into twelve tribes for the service of God, and in addition to the remaining tribes, the Levitical order, itself divided according to further priestly and Levitical orders; so I think that all the people of Christ according to the hidden man of the heart, being called a 'Jew in secret' and having been 'circumcised in the spirit' (cf. Rom. 2:28–29), have the natures of the tribes more mystically.[69]

For Origen, to be a Christian was to be a "Jew in secret" and to have been "circumcised in the spirit." The church, therefore, retains the nature of the people of Israel in a mystical sense. Origen affirms a robust continuity between Israel and the Christian people.

Of course, Origen derives this understanding of the church not from his own invention, but from the apostle Paul himself. In Origen's systematic treatment of biblical interpretation, *On First Principles*, he explains that "the apostle, raising our understanding, says somewhere, 'Behold Israel according to the flesh,' as if there is some Israel according to the spirit. And he says elsewhere, 'For these children of the flesh are not the children of God, nor are all Israel who are from Israel.'"[70] Taking his cue from Paul, Origen argues that the true Israelite is the one in spirit, that is, the follower of the promised Messiah. As N.R.M de Lange notes, "Crucial to the whole argument is the paradox that the Jews and the Gentiles suffer a reversal of roles. The historical Israelites cease to be Israelites, while the believers from the Gentiles become the New Israel. This involves a redefinition of Israel."[71]

An equally important component of Origen's ecclesiological construction is the illumination he believes Christ's coming provided. As he says, "the light contained in the law of Moses, having been hidden under a veil, showed forth at the arrival of Jesus, when the veil was taken away, and the good things

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69 *Comm. Jn.* 1.1, *SC* 120: 56. Origen alludes to Rom. 2.28–29.

70 *De Princ.* IV.3.6, *SC* 269: 366. Origen cites 1 Cor. 10.18 and Rom. 9.6.

71 de Lange, *Origen*, 80. Cf. *Hom. Num.* 15.3

came into knowledge at once, which the letter held as a shadow."[72] Only at the arrival of Christ did the shadows and figures of the Old Testament come to full view as symbols about Christ and the church. As Simon insightfully notes, for Origen "the church is in the Old Testament. She is Israel…;" as a result, "Israel's rites should be understood as the simple prefiguration of the Christian rites."[73] All that the Old Testament law had to say about Israel Origen sees as fulfilled in the church.

A Typology of Priesthood

This hermeneutic of ecclesiological continuity with Israel allows Origen to understand the Old Testament Levitical priesthood in a typological way as well. As Daniélou defines it, typology is "the essential idea of analogy between the actions of God in the events, institutions and individuals of the Old and New Testament."[74] Elsewhere, Daniélou describes typology as "a relation between realities both of which are historical, and not between historical realities and a timeless world."[75] Likewise, R.P.C. Hanson emphasizes both the "similar situation" between the events and the "fulfillment" aspect of typology. He explains: "Christian typology… was a *fulfilled* typology, that is to say, it saw each of the Old Testament types as ultimately no more than prophecies or pointers to the reality which had taken place in the Christian dispensation."[76] The realities of the Old Testament become "figures" or "types" of realities found in the New Testament, Christ, or his church. The important point to observe is that a typological interpretation works primarily upon an analogy between historical realities, not between historical (visible) and spiritual (invisible) realities. While much of Origen's interpretation of Levitical

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72 *De Princ.* IV.1.6, *SC* 269: 282.

73 "L'Église est dans l'Ancien Testament. Elle est Israël...Les rites d'Israël doivent être entendus comme la simple préfiguration des rites chrétiens." Simon, *Verus Israel*, 104–105.

74 "… l'idée essentielle de l'analogie entre les actions de Dieu dans les événements, les institutions et les personnages de l'Ancien et du Nouveau Testament." Daniélou, "Origène comme exégète," 285.

75 Jean Daniélou, "The Fathers and the Scriptures," *Eastern Churches' Quarterly* 10 (1954): 268.

76 R.P.C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1959), 67 italics original. See pp.7 & 22 for his formal definition which emphasizes the aspect of "similar situation" between type and antitype.

priesthood does move from historical to spiritual (the heart, soul, morals, and so on), his appropriation of the Levitical priesthood as a "type" of the Christian ministry does not. Instead, he moves from one historical reality to another, from one visible institution (Israelite priesthood) to another visible institution (Christian ecclesial office). Several examples work to demonstrate this typological reading in Origen.

Because neither Christians nor Jews worshipped in the Temple in Jerusalem, or offered bloody animal sacrifices any longer, the Old Testament institution of priesthood and its accompanying regulations could not be read without some alteration by both faith communities. It should come as no surprise that Origen applies his typological hermeneutic to his reading of the Old Testament laws. As he says in Homily 4 on Numbers, "We return thus to this Tabernacle of the church of the living God and see how each of these [prescriptions of the Law] ought to be observed in the church of God by the priests of Christ (*sacerdotibus Christi*)."[77] The old law must still be observed, even in the church of God. Just as the priests of Israel were responsible for the exercise of these laws, so too the "priests of Christ" must enact these commands in the church. Elsewhere in Homily 9 on Leviticus, Origen reminds his listeners: "the things which are written in the law were shown to be copies (*exemplaria*) and figures (*formae*) of living and true things."[78] Those "living and true things" were, for Origen, none other than the realities now present in the Christian ministerial leadership.

Such passages demonstrate that Origen reads the Old Testament, even the more difficult parts like Leviticus and Numbers, with an assumption of continuity between the institutions and laws of Israel and the institutions and obligations of the church. Yet this continuity was not, and could not be, a mere continuation of the old without transformation and change. As Hans von Campenhausen explains,

> The Christian church does not simply continue as the old people of God on the same level. Rather, it has brought to fulfillment Israel's law in a higher, 'spiritual' way and by that has revealed for the first time the true, 'mystical' sense of the earlier regulations; the law of leadership and rule appears now in a more altered, spiritual form.[79]

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77 *Hom. Num.* 4.3.1, *SC* 415: 108.

78 *Hom. Lev.* 9.2.1, *SC* 287: 74–76.

79 "Die christliche Kirche setzt ja das alte Gottesvolk nicht einfach auf derselben Ebene fort. Sie hat sein Gesetz vielmehr auf aine höhere, ‚geistliche' Weise zur Erfüllung gebracht und damit erst den wahren, ‚mystichen' Sinn der früheren Bestimmungen enthüllt, und auch

In a homily on Numbers seen previously, Origen provides us with an extended example of his hermeneutic played out on Christian priesthood. Having finished a discussion of his hermeneutical approach, Origen moves to an application of these passages regarding the Israelite sacrifice of first-fruits. He has just previously discussed the assertion in Hebrews 10:1 that "the law is but a shadow of the good things to come," and now attempts to demonstrate that principle of the "mystical sense (*mysticum sensum*)"[80] in his reading of the first-fruits and the priesthood:

> This passage which we have in our hands, it seems to me, invites the interpretation that it is right and useful to offer first-fruits to the priests of the gospel (*sacerdotibus Evangelii*) as well. For thus the Lord arranged that those who proclaim the gospel live from the gospel, and those who serve the altar participate in the altar (cp. 1 Cor 9:13)—this is right and decent. And for this reason, it is contrary, indecent and unworthy, even impious, that one who worships God and enters into the church of God, who knows that the priests (*sacerdotes*) and ministers stand by the altar and serve either in the Word of God or in the ministry of the church, should not offer to the priests (*sacerdotibus*) the first-fruits from the produce of the earth, which God gave by bringing forth his sun and by providing his rains…[81]

Origen draws upon Paul's first letter to the Corinthians to establish his reading: the Old Testament priests are fulfilled by and correspond to the Christian leaders; the old ministers of the altar who receive the first-fruits represent the current Christian ministers who also receive support from their congregation. Thus, Origen's "mystical" reading has a continuity of application, yet a transformation. In each dispensation the gifts are offered to the spiritual leaders of the people of God, and in this sense, his reading is a literal appropriation of the Numbers text. Yet, Israel with its Temple and priesthood no longer remain and the interpretation moves beyond the literal sense as Origen makes application to "the priests of the *gospel*" who perform "the ministry of the *church*." The "offering of the first-fruits" becomes the financial support a congregation owed to its ministers. This is not Origen's invention (he is drawing explicitly upon Paul), but this passage demonstrates the typological hermeneutic employed in Origen's reading of the Old Testament priesthood.

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das Gesetz der Führung und Herrschaft erscheint nunmehr in veränderter, geistlicher Gestalt." von Campenhausen, *Kirchliches Amt*, 281.

80 *Hom. Num.* 11.2.1, *SC* 442: 22.

81 *Hom. Num.* 11.2.2, *SC* 442: 22–24.

Perhaps the most striking example of Origen's typological interpretation of Israel and its priesthood, one which maintains both a continuity and yet a significant transformation, comes from Homily 2.1 on Joshua. In an exegetically rich passage, Origen expounds on the death of Moses, explaining to his audience that "unless you understand how Moses died, you will not be able to draw your attention to how Joshua [Jesus] reigns."[82] He then moves into a skillful and enlightening contrast between "Moses" and "Iesus":

> If you consider closely that Jerusalem is destroyed, the altar having been abandoned, that nowhere are there sacrifices or offerings or first-fruits, nowhere priests (*sacerdotes*), nowhere high priests (*pontificies*), nowhere the ministry of Levites (*ministeria Levitarum*)—when you see that all these things have ceased, say that "Moses the servant of God is dead" (Josh. 1:2).
>
> If you see no one coming three times a year before the face of God, neither offering gifts in the temple, nor celebrating the Passover, nor eating the unleavened bread, nor offering the first-fruits, nor consecrating the first-born—when you do not see these things being celebrated, say that "Moses the servant of God is dead" (Josh. 1:2)
>
> But when you see Gentiles entering into the faith, churches (*ecclesias*) being built, the altars (*altaria*) no longer spattered with the blood of animals, but being consecrated with the precious blood of Christ, when you see priests and Levites (*sacerdotes et Levitas*) attending not to the blood of bulls and goats, but to the Word of God through the grace of the Holy Spirit… when you see all these things, then say that "Moses the servant of God is dead" (Josh. 1:2) and *Iesus* the Son of God occupies his place.[83]

In this lengthy passage, Origen compares Moses and *Iesus*, but in doing so he also draws out an entire portrait of continuity and contrast between dispensations and institutions, the old and new rites, the old and new priesthood, the old and new people of God. Daniélou comments upon the passage this way:

> In this magnificent text there appears at the same time both the succession and the continuity of the two economies, simultaneously all the novelty of the gospel and all the collapse of the Law. And at the same time—and this, properly speaking, is the notion of 'figure'—the resemblance between the spiritual realities of the New law

82 *Hom. Jos.* 2.1, SC 71: 116. In the Greek text Origen is using, the name for Joshua is also the name for Jesus (*Iesus*), thus allowing Origen to use an historical text about the Israelite Joshua (*Iesus*) and draw out exegetical lessons about Jesus (*Iesus*).

83 *Hom. Jos.* 2.1, SC 71: 116–118.

> and the fleshly realities of the Old…. We have here a typology that is profoundly traditional in that it contains a dogmatic reality, one which is in fact an essential part of the deposit of the church.[84]

Here, perhaps, Origen's typological and ecclesiological reading of Scripture bears upon the issue of a hierarchical priesthood most forcefully. Because the new still maintains a continuity with the old, the Israelite priesthood still finds application in the church. Yet, because there is also discontinuity and transformation from Moses to Jesus, that application must move beyond a simple succession. The result: the old priesthood of Israel has been fulfilled and transformed in a new priesthood, embodied in the Christian ministerial leadership. The Temple of old no longer remains, those old bloody sacrifices are no longer offered, the old priesthood exists no more. In its place, church buildings arise, the word of God is preached, and the Christian leaders inherit the title "priests."[85]

Christian Material Culture

It is clear that the church was portrayed by Origen as a *polis*, an alternate society, distinct with its own institutions, rituals, laws and leadership. Moreover, that political ecclesiology is further nuanced by Origen's express understanding of the church in relationship with Israel, such that Origen's ecclesiology is best understood as both political and religious or theological: a religio-political ecclesiology. Yet there is evidence within the Origen-corpus that something else brings this religio-political ecclesiology into even sharper focus: the rise of

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84 "Dans ce texte magnifique apparaît à la fois la succession et la continuité des deux économies, à la fois toute la nouveauté de l'Évangile et toute la vétusté de la Loi, et, en même temps—et c'est proprement la notion de figure—la ressemblance des réalités spirituelles de la Loi nouvelle et des réalités charnelles de l'Ancienne.... Nous sommes ici dans la typologie en ce qu'elle a de profondément traditionnel, en ce qu'elle contient de réalité dogmatique, en ce qui en fait une part essentielle du dépôt de l'Église." Daniélou, *Origène, le génie*, 153.

85 Daniélou has suggested, surprisingly, that "the institutions of the Old Testament are the figures of the invisible realities of the New and not the realities of the visible church" (*Origène*, le *génie*, 74). This seems to press Origen too narrowly into purely invisible, spiritual allegory. As I hope I have demonstrated, Origen also seems quite willing to apply a typological reading of the Old Testament priesthood to the visible Christian priesthood of the New covenant.

a Christian material culture. With the relatively new development of emerging Christian material culture comes the further development of the church beginning to inhabit sacred space in a new way, a significant context in which the identification of the Christian bishop as a priest can take place.

In a previously examined homily on Joshua, Origen makes reference to "churches being built" as one sign of a new age, the age of Jesus and his redefined Israel.[86] What other indication is there of an awareness of an emerging Christian material culture, and how might this bear upon the understanding of a Christian ministerial priesthood? Given Origen's fixation on all things spiritual and invisible, it should come as no surprise that his references to a material Christian culture are infrequent. Hanson is correct to assert that "Origen's references to Christian institutions in his works are on the whole not very frequent, and to the Christian cultus surprisingly rare."[87] Yet, there are a few texts that give indication of both the existence of such an emerging material culture, and Origen's own awareness of the importance of such a reality.

In the same series of homilies on Joshua in which he mentions the erecting of church buildings, Origen gives us a rare glimpse into a church scene of his day. He warns his audience against a show of religiosity without a real change of life, warning them not to be like those who fail to live a life in agreement with their Christian profession and yet "come to the church (*ecclesiam*) and bow their heads to the priests (*sacerdotibus*), perform their duties, honor the servants of God, and bring something for decorating the altar or the church."[88] Here we get a unique window into early Christian culture, where believers were expected to gather at the Christian assembly, show reverence to their priestly leader and participate in the decorating of the church building and its altar. Origen demonstrates a clear awareness of the church with a real, concrete institutional life. Important for this particular examination, Origen also mentions, in the same context, the presence of priests and servants of God who play an important role in that material culture of Christian sacred space.

Another indication of an awareness of an emerging Christian space comes from Origen's understanding of the church as the spiritual Temple, a view scattered throughout his homilies on Leviticus. For example, Origen likens

86 See *Hom. Jos.* 2.1, SC 71: 116–118.

87 R.P.C. Hanson, *Origen's Doctrine of Tradition* (London: S.P.C.K., 1954), 176.

88 *Hom. Jos.* 10.3, SC 71: 276.

the church to the Temple of the Lord, saying "Behold, you stand in the Temple (*in templo*) of the Lord Jesus, that is, in his church (*ecclesia*); this is the temple built from living stones."[89] This view, as Daly observs, is largely non-material, a view "which sees the community and the individual as the new temple constructed of living stones, and the individual heart, soul or mind as the altar on which is offered the sacrifices of the new law."[90]

Yet Origen addresses a more concrete aspect of the Temple-church analogy in homily 9 on Leviticus. There, Origen addresses the meaning of the two sanctuaries in the old tabernacle, one visible and open to priests, the other inaccessible. He explains: "I think that the first sanctuary (*aedes*) can be understood as this church (*Ecclesia*) in which we are now placed in the flesh (*in carne*), in which priests (*sacerdotes*) minister, offering burnt sacrifices on the altar."[91] Here the church is likened not only to the tabernacle, but also to the place where sacrifices are offered at the altar. The place of assembly, the church, becomes the place of sacrifice, much like the Temple of old. What went on in the worship practices of Israel has continuity with Christian worship practices in Origen's own day. As shown earlier, Origen thinks that "Every single thing which is written in the law is a figure (*formae*) of the things which ought to be carried on in the church."[92] Without denying the spiritual and invisible dimension of Origen's understanding, the physicality of space and place is also apparent in his depiction of the Christian "sanctuary." Important to note in this passage, Origen also mentions the priests (*sacerdotes*) as central to this Christian material sacred space.

A passage that speaks particularly to the idea of the "holy" or "sacred" is found in Origen's eleventh homily on Levitucus. Having reminded his audience that many things are called "holy" (*sancta*) in the Scriptures, including vessels, garments, and places, Origen moves to a contemporary application. He provides his listeners with a personal example in which a first-born calf was born in his possession and was consecrated to the Lord as holy. According to Origen, things declared holy must be set apart in their use. For example, "there are bowls and cups… which must never leave the Temple (*templo*), but always remain in the sanctuaries (*sanctis*)." Likewise, "vestments which are called holy (*sancta*) must not be subject to the use of a priest (*pontificis*) in his

89 *Hom. Lc.*, SC 87: 234. Cf. *Hom. Lev.* 9.5.

90 Daly, "Sacrificial Soteriology," 875.

91 *Hom. Lev.* 9.9, SC 287: 114.

92 *Hom. Lev.* 5.12, SC 286: 260.

house, but in the Temple (*templo*)."[93] His application, relating initially to the Old Testament institutions, clearly has reference to the church as well. It is no stretch to see in Origen's mind the church (and its own *sacra*) as the meaning behind these commands for consecration. There is a clear sense of the "sacred" in this homily that pertains not just to holiness in living, but to the various articles and vessels for church use. Again, as before, the notion of priesthood exists alongside this discussion of a sacred material culture. Priesthood and sacred space go hand in hand in Origen's discussions.

This connection between "sacred things" and the priesthood is found again in Origen's third homily on Leviticus. Expounding Leviticus 5:14 ("If anyone sins unintentionally against the holy things of the Lord…") Origen identifies the "holy things" (*sancta*) with "those things which were offered in the gifts of the Lord." He explains: "For example, [they are] the prayers and gifts which are offered in the churches of God for the use of the holy things (*in Ecclesiis Dei ad usum sanctorum*) and the priestly ministry (*ministerium sacerdotum*) or for the needs of the poor."[94] Again, the "holy things" (*sancta*) are in part the visible offerings brought to the church for the use of the priests and others in need. A Christian priesthood and the notion of sacred objects and sacred space appear connected in Origen's mind.

Thus Origen gives witness to a distinct, visible reality to the Christian church which includes buildings, altars and sacred vessels. Most important, Origen's discussions of this sacred material culture also frequently include references to the Christian "priesthood." This suggests that part of Origen's understanding of a Christian priesthood includes the notion of their responsibility to guard, protect and use the sacred space and sacred things. The church, then, according to Origen is a *polis*, an alternate society, distinct not only with its own institutions, rituals and leadership, but also sacred space and sacred objects. Further, this new *polis* was intentionally linked to the biblical nation of Israel such that when Origen reads the commands and promises to Israel, he

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93 *Hom. Lev.* 11.1, *SC* 287: 144. It is difficult to determine precisely whether Origen here refers exclusively to the Old Testament temple and furnishings or to both Old Testament and Christian realities. Given the context of the passage and his obvious awareness of a concrete altar, there is good reason to suggest he means both Old Testament and Christian liturgical realities.

94 *Hom. Lev.* 3.6, *SC* 286: 146. See also Schöllgen for a discussion of this text (*Die Anfänge der Professionalisierung des Klerus und das kirchliche Amt in der Syrischen Didaskalie*, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum 26 [Munster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1998], 72).

understands them as references to the church. When he reads about the roles and responsibilities of the Levitical priests, he understands them as a typological model of Christian leadership. The church is identified as the fulfillment of Israel, now embodied in actual space in the Greco-Roman world. This religio-political ecclesiology thus resides as an important backdrop to Origen's appropriation of the Levitical priesthood as a type or figure for Christian leadership.

Conclusion

Though Origen never sets forth a systematic treatment of his views on the Christian bishop or ministerial hierarchy, one can readily ascertain his understanding, particularly from his homilies on Leviticus, Numbers and Joshua. It is clear from these and other texts that Origen understands the Christian minister in light of the Levitical priesthood. Where the Old Testament text speaks of the priest, Origen regularly understands it to mean the Christian minister. Furthermore, Origen portrays the instructional, sacrificial, and governmental duties of the Christian minister as priestly fulfillments. Perhaps surprising to some scholars, the bishop's presiding role over the Eucharistic sacrifice is not very prominent in Origen's portrayal of the Christian hierarchical priesthood. Certainly, Origen assumes the sacrament as important to his understanding of Christian worship and even one of the bishop's tasks; yet, it rarely provides the link for Origen in understanding why the bishop is designated a priest.

Instead, the key to this connection between Old Testament priest and Christian office lies in understanding Origen's religio-political ecclesiology. The Jewish Scriptures are the Christian Scriptures. Israel in the flesh foreshadows the church of God. Yet his portrayal of the church as Israel is never merely a spiritual or invisible reality (though it certainly includes that). Rather, Origen portrays a much more social and political understanding of the church. The church is a *polis*, a "divine nation" comparable to, yet distinct from, the Greco-Roman *polis* with its own sacred objects and sacred space, its own rites and institutions, its own leadership. Origen's ecclesiology is more than an abstract reality; instead, the "nation" or "race" to which the church is compared is that of ancient biblical Israel. From this religio-political ecclesiology, Origen easily connects the Levitical priest and Christian bishop. The spiritual ruler of the old people of God, the cultic leader, the guardian of the *sancta* is now fulfilled by the Christian bishop, the new "priest," the new leader of the people of God and the Christian *sacra*.

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MINISTERS OF THE ALTAR, LEADERS OF THE CHURCH

Cyprian of Carthage

We now turn our attention from Origen in the east to another third-century thinker, this time a representative from the west. Cyprian of Carthage is perhaps the most prominent western bishop of the third century, called by some "the leading and guiding force of the Western Church" in his day.[1] His collection of epistles and treatises provide us a unique glimpse into third-century Christian life and specifically the life of an early Christian bishop in North Africa. Although many scholars would agree with Michael Fahey's conclusion that "Cyprian was not a profound or creative theologian gifted with rich and original insights,"[2] Cyprian remains one of the most important figures regarding the Christian ministerial priesthood in the first four centuries. He has been highlighted repeatedly as the thinker through whom the most radical development occurred concerning a new conception of Christian ministry.

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1 Henk Bakker, Paul van Geest, and Hans van Loon, eds., "Introduction: Cyprian's Stature and influence" in *Cyprian of Carthage: Studies in His Life, Language, and Thought*, eds. Bakker et al (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 3.

2 Michael Fahey, *Cyprian and the Bible: A Study in Third-Century Exegesis* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1971), 624. A notable exception would be A. D'Alès who suggest that "the imprint placed by Cyprian on the theology of the West is so profound" that it would take two volumes to do it justice" (*La théologie de saint Cyprien*, 2nd ed. [Paris: Gabriel Beauchesne, 1922], xii).

J.B. Lightfoot's remarks from over a century ago have been repeated and affirmed throughout the years: Cyprian "marks the period of transition from the universal sacerdotalism of the New Testament to the particular sacerdotalism of a later age" and has "boldly transferred himself into the new domain."[3] What are we to make of this figure in Christian history who, on the one hand, is dismissed as an unoriginal theologian and, on the other hand, eschewed as a radical innovator in the theology of Christian ministry? Furthermore, are Lightfoot's remarks a fair assessment of Cyprian's place in the development of a Christian ministerial priesthood?

It is perhaps fair to say that when compared with the likes of Origen or Augustine, Cyprian was not a profound theologian pushing the boundaries of doctrinal expression. He came to Christianity, and to the episcopal office, late in life, wrote for no more than a decade, and was then martyred for his faith.[4] It is not surprising that his theological insights are not as developed as other giants in the Christian tradition. However, Cyprian is supremely significant for providing one of the clearest articulations of the episcopal office portrayed on the model of the Old Testament priesthood. Yet, while Cyprian articulates this notion perhaps more frequently and more fervently than preceding thinkers, he nevertheless stands well within the interpretive tradition of the early church, not just in North Africa, but around the empire as well. For that reason, as I will demonstrate, it is inaccurate to say that Cyprian forged a brand new conception of the Christian ministry in sacerdotal terms. What then did his ministerial priesthood look like and what clues does he provide as to the basis for his understanding?

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3 J.B. Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry* (New York: Whittaker, 1878), 131. For similar sentiments, see also Thomas Lindsay, *The Church and the Ministry in the Early Centuries* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1902), 309; and G.S.M. Walker, *The Churchmanship of St. Cyprian* (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1969), 37–38.

4 For a nice summary of Cyprian's life and ministry see Edward White Benson's old, but still useful, *Cyprian: His Life, His Times, His Work* (London: Macmillan, 1897); Michael Sage, *Cyprian* (Cambridge, MA: Philadelphia Patristic Foundation, 1975); G.W. Clarke's introductions in his 4 volume series, *The Letters of St. Cyprian of Carthage* (New York: Newman Press, 1984–1989); J. Patout Burns, *Cyprian the Bishop* (New York: Routledge, 2002); and more recently, *Cyprian of Carthage*, eds. Bakker et al; and Allen Brent, *Cyprian and Roman Carthage* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2010).

A Christian Ministerial Priesthood

There is no doubt that Cyprian thinks of the bishop in priestly ways.[5] Although he uses a number of designations for the bishop (*praepositus*, *pastor*, *antistes*, *iudex*, *gubernator*) his preference for *sacerdos* is exceptional. Richard Seagraves, in his lexical study *Pascentes cum Disciplina*, has demonstrated the statistical facts on this point. Within the works of Cyprian, *sacerdos* is used 122 times to refer to the bishop. The next most frequent term is *praepostitus* at 40 uses.[6]

Since a number of scholars have already examined Cyprian's writings with explicit interest in his conception of the Christian ministerial priesthood,[7] what follows is a brief summary of the consensus and then suggestions for further observations and critiques upon that consensus in light of Cyprian's works and our present overarching thesis. Most scholars today agree in some fashion with the words of J.B. Lightfoot regarding Cyprian: "the offering of the eucharist, being regarded as the one special act of sacrifice, and appearing externally to the eyes as the act of the officiating minister, might well lead to the minister being called a priest."[8] R.P.C. Hanson represents this modern

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5 There is considerable debate about whether Cyprian sees the presbyter as a *sacerdos* as well. For a good survey of this debate, see Colin Bulley, *The Priesthood of Some Believers: Developments from the General to the Special Priesthood in the Christian Literature of the First Three Centuries* (Waynesboro, Ga: Paternoster, 2000), 115–118. See also Walker, *Churchmanship*, 38; Richard Seagraves, *Pascentes cum Disciplina: A Lexical Study of the Clergy in the Cyprianic Correspondence* (Freibourg, Switz.: Éditions Universitaires, 1993), 41; Albano Vilela, *La condition collegiale des prêtres au IIIe siècle* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1971), 282–283; and Adrien Demoustier, "L'ontologie de l'église selon saint Cyprien," *Recherches de science religieuse* 52 (1964): 570, n.62. In the end, Cyprian never directly applies the term *sacerdos* to a presbyter; from this observation, it is fair to conclude that *sacerdos* was not the typical way in which he viewed the presbyter. However, there are places where Cyprian includes presbyters in the "sacerdotal rank" and from these few texts, it seems that Cyprian has no problem understanding them as sharing in the bishop's "sacerdotal honor" even if they are not, strictly speaking, *sacerdotes* themselves.

6 Seagraves, *Pascentes cum Disciplina*, 40 n.1. Of course Cyprian also uses the term *episcopus* for the bishop, a term used as frequently as *sacerdos*.

7 See for example, Maurice Bévenot, "'Sacerdos' as Understood by Cyprian," *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 30 (1979): 413–429; Gustave Bardy, "Le sacerdoce chrétien d'apres saint Cyprien," *La vie spirituelle* 60 (1939): 87–119; John Henry Bernard, "The Cyprianic Doctrine of the Ministry," in *Essays on the Early History of the Church and the Ministry*, ed. H.B. Swete (London: Macmillan, 1918), 215–262.

8 Lightfoot, *Ministry*, 138.

acceptance of Lightfoot's conclusions when he says that Cyprian "adopted the most advanced and sacerdotal doctrine of the ministry and, bound up with it, a correspondingly developed doctrine of the Eucharist."[9] In other words, most scholars argue that Cyprian identifies the bishop as a priest because of the bishop's role in presiding over the Eucharistic sacrifice. There is certainly truth to this conclusion. Of the thinkers and church orders examined so far, Cyprian is by far the most explicit about both the bishop's role as the Eucharistic president and his title as *sacerdos*.

On several occasions, Cyprian explicitly connects the Christian priesthood with the bishop's role in offering the sacrifice of the Eucharist. In Epistle 63, he gives instructions on how to prepare the chalice for communion, strongly urging that it must be water mixed with wine, not just bare water. His reasoning is that bishops must follow the example of Christ himself: "And because we make mention of his passion in every sacrifice (for the passion of the Lord is the sacrifice we offer), then we ought to do nothing other than what Christ did."[10] Later in the same epistle, Cyprian reinforces this teaching, explicitly connecting it to ideas about priesthood: "Therefore, beloved brother, it is fitting to our religion and fear [of the Lord] as well as the very place and office of our priesthood (*officio sacerdotii nostri*) to guard the truth of our Lord's instruction by mixing the Lord's cup [with wine] and offering (*offerendo*) it up."[11] Here Cyprian's conception of the "office of the priesthood" entails, at least in part, the sacrifice of the Eucharist itself. It is clear that an important aspect of the ministerial priesthood for Cyprian entailed this function as one who offers the sacrifice of the church, especially the Eucharist.

Even more frequently, Cyprian ties together the threefold ideas of a Christian priesthood, altar and sacrifices. In his treatise *On the Unity of the Church*, he addresses the question of whether rival bishops can set up alternate places of worship. Cyprian vehemently objects, describing the results of such action:

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9 Hanson, *Studies in Christian Antiquity*, 103. See also M.F. Wiles, "The Theological Legacy of St. Cyprian," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 14 no. 2 (1963): 148, who says "Cyprian also saw the priesthood as very closely paralleled and fulfilled in the Christian ministry... he saw the Old Testament sacrifices as fulfilled... by the sacrifice of the Christian eucharist;" and Bernard, "It seems probable that the Eucharistic language of the early Church prepared the way for, and suggested, the use of the term 'priest' to denote the minister of the Church's offering to God" ("The Cyprianic Doctrine of Ministry," 227).

10 *Ep.* 63.17.1, *CCSL* 3C: 413. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.

11 *Ep.* 63.19, *CCSL* 3C: 416.

> He bears arms against the church, he fights against the arrangement of God. An enemy of the altar (*altaris*), a rebel against Christ's sacrifice (*sacrificium*)… by despising the bishops and forsaking the priests of God (*Dei sacerdotibus*), he dares to set up another altar (*altare*), to make another prayer with illegal words, to profane the truth of the Lord's offering by false sacrifices (*falsa sacrificia*).[12]

Again in Epistle 72, Cyprian avers that the schismatics have received an improper ordination and have "attempted to offer (*offerre*) false and sacreligious sacrifices (*sacrificia*) outside [the church] in opposition to the one, divine altar (*altare*)."[13] This rebellion, says Cyprian, would prevent them from remaining bishops even if they returned to the church, "For the priests and ministers (*sacerdotes et ministros*) who serve the altar and sacrifices (*altari et sacrificiis*) ought to be pure and blameless."[14] Additional texts could be cited,[15] but the point is well demonstrated that Cyprian sees a strong connection between the Christian priesthood and the idea of sacrifice at the altar.

The aim of this chapter, then, is not to deny this connection between priesthood and Eucharist in Cyprian, but rather to argue that it is an incomplete and too narrow a view of his understanding of the episcopal-priestly office.[16] First, as we have begun to see and as will be demonstrated further, it is not just the Eucharist, but sacrifices more broadly conceived (Christian worship in general) that Cyprian considers when he speaks of the Christian priesthood. As a result, Cyprian's understanding of the bishop as a priest is tied not to the Eucharist in particular, but to the entire task of presiding over Christian worship, which by its very nature is sacrificial in character. From this perspective, what lies behind Cyprian's designation of the bishop as a *sacerdos* is the accumulation of liturgical functions (prayer, baptism, Eucharist) all cast in sacrificial terms. This might be termed his liturgical leadership function.

Second, I will demonstrate that the liturgical role of the bishop is not the only important role of the bishop-priest for Cyprian. The governing, or administrative, role is equally important in Cyprian's designation of the bishop

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12 *De Unit.* 17, *CCSL* 3: 262.

13 *Ep.* 72.2.1, *CCSL* 3C: 526.

14 *Ep.* 72.2.2, *CCSL* 3C: 526.

15 For example, see *De Unit.* 13; 18; *De Lap.* 15–16; 26; *Ep.* 1.1.1–2; 43.5.2; 65.2; 67.1.2; 68.2.

16 To this extent, the argument here about Cyprian will appear quite similar to the argument in the previous chapters on Tertullian and Origen. The Christian ministerial priesthood, for all three thinkers, was much broader than merely a connection with a sacrificial Eucharist.

qua priest. This aspect of Cyprian's priestly ministry has often been overlooked by scholars, but it is fundamental to a fuller understanding of the ministerial priesthood according to Cyprian. The Christian priest, then, is more than the one who presides over the Eucharist, or even sacrifices more broadly conceived. He is also the one who rules and governs the church, acts as judge in deciding cases, and guards and protects true Christian worship from heretical teaching. This might be termed the governmental function of the bishop-priest. What is important to see, and what will be demonstrated in the following pages, is that both the liturgical and the governmental functions of the bishop are deemed *sacerdotal* in the eyes of Cyprian.

Third, I once again want to draw attention to the religio-political ecclesiology that underlies Cyprian's connection between the Christian bishop and the Old Testament Levitical priesthood. Cyprian's use of the term *sacerdos* for the bishop nearly always finds its ground and source in the Israelite priesthood. By seeing the church in continuity with biblical Israel, Cyprian appropriates with ease certain biblical texts originally addressed to the nation of Israel and its leadership. Behind these connections between Old Testament priesthood and Christian episcopacy lies Cyprian's assumed ecclesiology that the church shares a heritage with Israel (including her Scriptures, history and priestly institutions). Exploring his ecclesiological hermeneutic will allow us to see more clearly how he can move from Levitical priesthood to the Christian episcopal office so freely and frequently. As a result, this chapter attempts to demonstrate the extent to which the Scriptures robustly shaped Cyprian's thinking not just on theological intricacies, but in the way he understood the practical dimensions and institutions of the church, its worship, and its leadership.

Fourth, the emerging Christian material culture in third-century North Africa forms an important backdrop to the way Cyprian talks about Christian worship and Christian priesthood. In short, the previous religio-political ecclesiology takes more concrete expression in this material culture such that the Christian bishop is the one who presides over the sacred space and sacred objects of the people of God. Just as the Old Testament priest served and attended the altar in the Temple, so also the Christian bishop acts as a priest by attending to the Christian altar in the church building. As with Tertullian and Origen before him, so also with Cyprian there is more than mere ideas and exegesis forcing a connection between Old Testament priesthood and Christian bishop, but also a material reality and actual Christian practice that interacts with and influences his understanding of Christian leadership and his reading of priestly texts.

Christian Priests: Liturgical Leaders of the Church

As already demonstrated, Cyprian sees a strong connection between the ideas of priesthood, sacrifice, and altar, and even occasionally identifies the Eucharist as the sacrifice over which the Christian bishop presides. This has led many scholars to conclude that Cyprian's designation of the bishop as a priest derives primarily (if not solely) from his understanding of the Eucharist as a sacrifice. In order to do justice to the writings of Cyprian himself, that narrower conception of priesthood must be broadened.

First, it is clear that Cyprian's understanding of Christian priesthood entails the offering of sacrifice. What is important to note, however, is that the Eucharist is not the only locus of meaning when Cyprian speaks of the sacrifices of the priests of God. Rather, Cyprian ascribes other sacrificial and liturgical functions to the Christian priest such as "administering the sacred rites," "offering supplication day and night" and administering the "service of God" as "ministers of God."[17]

For example, Cyprian makes it clear that part of the priestly role of the bishop includes his intercessory prayers. He argues that "everyone honored with the divine priesthood (*divino sacerdotio*)… ought to dedicate himself to nothing except the altar and sacrifices (*altari et sacrificiis*) and be freed entirely for supplications and prayers (*precibus atque orationibus*)."[18] This responsibility is echoed again in Epistle 65 where Cyprian explains that the task of the Christian priest is to "make satisfaction (*satisfacere*) and to apply himself to pleasing the Lord, day and night, with tears and prayers and supplications (*lacrimis et orationibus et precibus*)."[19]

Moreover, in a letter to a group of persecuted Christians condemned to work in the mines, Cyprian reminds them that even if they cannot celebrate the Eucharist, by their humble faith they are still "celebrating and offering a sacrifice to God (*sacrificium Deo*)… This is the sacrifice to God you are offering, this is the sacrifice you are celebrating without interruption, day and night. You yourselves have become offerings to God…"[20] Part of

17 Even Bernard, who earlier suggested the connection between the Eucharist and priesthood, notes that the idea of sacrifice is much broader than just Eucharistic ("The Cyprianic Doctrine," 229). These phrases will be examined in context further below.

18 *Ep.* 1.1.1, *CCSL* 3B: 1.

19 *Ep.* 65.1.2, *CCSL* 3C: 426–27.

20 *Ep.* 76.3.1–2, *CCSL* 3C: 611–612.

the sacrifices offered by Christians and Christian *sacerdotes* include prayers, supplications, and a life of godly witness. Thus, it is clear from Cyprian's letters that the Eucharist is not the only sacrifice offered by Christians—he also considers prayers, supplications, and the entirety of the Christian life to be a Christian sacrifice, equally connected with his understanding of episcopal priesthood.

Elsewhere, in his treatise *On the Lord's Prayer*, Cyprian explains that when praying, one should "be under discipline, observing quietness and modesty." This is true even in corporate worship:

> And when we come together with the brethren in one place and celebrate the divine sacrifices (*sacrificia divina*) with the priest of God (*cum Dei sacerdote*), we ought to be mindful of modesty and discipline—not to brandish about our prayers (*preces*) here and there with disorderly voices, nor to throw about with tumultuous wordiness a petition (*petitionem*) which ought to be commended to God with modesty.[21]

Here the priests of God offer not just one sacrifice in the Eucharist, but a multitude of sacrifices (*sacrificia*, plural). The prayers and petitions throughout the service are part of the sacrifices celebrated by the *sacerdotes Dei*.

This raises an important observation about the way Cyprian uses the words *altare* and *sacrificium*. Nearly without exception, Cyprian refers to the singular *altare* when speaking of local Christian worship.[22] When he uses the plural, it is always in reference to pagan or schismatic alternate places of worship, such as in Epistle 69 when he describes the heretics as those who "forge false altars (*falsa altaria*)."[23] The Christian altar, however, is always singular, such as when he describes the schismatic group as being "in opposition to the one, divine altar (*altare unum atque divinum*)."[24] In contrast, while he will occasionally speak of the singular *sacrificium*, when referring to the Eucharist,[25] Cyprian most regularly refers to the sacrifices of the Christian

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21 *Dom. Or.* 4, *CCSL* 3A : 91.

22 In his epistle *Ad Demetrius* 12 he does speak of the *altaria Dei* (the only occasion in all his writings where he uses the plural in reference to non-schismatic Christian worship). In the context, however, Cyprian is making a contrast between pagan worship and Christian worship in all of North Africa, not just in one place (*CCSL* 3A: 42).

23 *Ep.* 69.1.4, *CCSL* 3C: 471.

24 *Ep.* 72.2.1, CCSL 3C: 526.

25 E.g. see *Ep.* 63.9.3 and 63.14.4 where he speaks of the Eucharist as a *sacrificium Dominicum* and *sacrificium verum et plenum deo* (*CCSL* 3C: 401 & 411, respectively).

priesthood in the plural (*sacrificia*). In other words, there is one altar, but many sacrifices.[26] The priests of God "wait upon the sacrifices [pl.] (*sacrificiis*) of the altar [sg.] (*altari*)."[27] They are devoted "exclusively to the altar [sg.] (*altari*) and sacrifices [pl] (*sacrificiis*)."[28] In order to "administer the priesthood (*sacerdotium Dei administrare*)" says Cyprian, Christian bishops must be "fit to do service at the altar [sg.] (*altari*) and to celebrate the divine sacrifices [pl.] (*sacrificia divina*)."[29] The Christian *sacrificia* exist in a plurality, not in a singular aspect of worship such as the Eucharist. Given the previous demonstration that Christian *sacrificia* include the church's prayers, petitions, and godly living, the point is clear that Christian bishops are priests not simply in their celebration of the *sacrificium* [sg.] of the Eucharist, but in their entire liturgical leadership over the multitude of *sacrificia* [pl.] of prayers and supplications in worship.[30]

Even the bishop's role in administering baptism is seen as part of his priestly function. In Epistle 73, Cyprian addresses the question of whether the catholic church should cease from baptizing schismatics who enter the catholic church because Novatian the schismatic is also re-baptizing catholics who join his church. Cyprian is adamant:

> What? Should we then reject our priestly chair (*cathedrae sacerdotalis*) just because Novatian usurps the honor of the priestly chair (*cathedrae sacerdotalis*)? Ought we to cease from the altar and sacrifices just because Novatian attempts to set up an

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26 I am indebted to Hans Georg Thümmel for pointing out this observation in Cyprian ("Versammlungsraum, Kirche, Tempel," in *Gemeinde ohne Tempel*, ed. Beate Ego, Armin Lange and Peter Pilhofer [Tübingen: Mohr, 1999], 496).

27 *Ep.* 72.2.2, *CCSL* 3C: 526.

28 *Ep.* 1.1.1, *CCSL* 3B: 1.

29 *Ep.* 67.1.1–2, *CCSL* 3C: 447–48. Albano Vilela makes the interesting observation that Cyprian always links the word *celebrare* to the bishop, never the presbyter. The word *offere*, however, is used for both the presbyter and the bishop. Vilela's observation makes sense, when he explains: "the term offere is thus a general term which designates the offering of the Eucharist, which can be made by the bishops or, in most cases, by the simple priest. The verb celebrare, employed solely for the bishop in a ministerial context, designates, on the contrary, a solemn Eucharistic action with the participation of the people" (*La condition collegiale*, 322). Vilela's point helps emphasize that the function of the bishop, although including the offering of the Eucharist, entails something much bigger, even something more "solemn": the entire liturgical service with the people.

30 Again, see earlier discussion of *Ep.* 76.3.1–2, *CCSL* 3C: 611–612 and *Dom. Or.* 4, *CCSL* 3A: 91.

> altar and makes offerings against the divine command? Ought we to appear not to celebrate similar [rites] that resemble his? It would be absolutely vain and foolish…"[31]

The rites of which Cyprian speaks, as the context makes clear, are those of the Eucharist *and* baptism (for remember, the issue of baptism is what prompted Cyprian's letter in the first place). What makes this text so important is that Cyprian implicitly connects the idea of the Christian priesthood with all, not just some, of the rites of the church, including baptism. Once again, for Cyprian the priestly role of the bishop entails all the liturgical functions of his office as he presides over the church's worshipping life, not just his role in presiding over the Eucharist.

From these examples, one gains a bigger picture of Cyprian's understanding of Christian priesthood and sacrifice. Rather than see the Christian priest always in connection with the Eucharistic sacrifice, Cyprian portrays the entire Christian worship as the sacrifices and "divine rites" over which the priest presides. As G.W. Clarke explains, the assumption of Cyprian is that the "Christian liturgy is in some undefined sense of a sacrificial nature."[32] Failure to see Cyprian's broader notion of Christian worship as sacrificial tempts one to attribute Cyprian's entire understanding of Christian priesthood to the connection with the Eucharist, failing to notice the broader and more comprehensive connections between Christian priesthood and Christian worship in general. The Christian bishop is a priest, according to Cyprian, not only because he presides over the Eucharistic sacrifice, but because he offers and celebrates all of the divine sacrifices and rites entailed in Christian liturgical worship.

In this sense Cyprian casts the entire Christian worship experience in terms of sacrifice and priestly responsibility, so that he can speak of priests of God who are "made available for the temple and altar and sacred ministries (*ministeriis divinis*)" and who "pursue sacred activities (*operationibus divinis*)" and "serve God's altar *and* church (*dei altari eius et ecclesiae*)."[33] Taken together, such texts speak of a much broader notion of priestly service to God than merely presiding over the Eucharistic sacrifice; instead, as Seagraves suggests, Cyprian's notion of priesthood entails "the sacramental and liturgical life"[34]

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31 *Ep*. 73.2.3, *CCSL* 3C: 532.

32 G.W. Clarke, *The Epistles*, vol. 1, 155, n.12.

33 *Ep* 1.1.1–2, *CCSL* 3B: 1–2.

34 Seagraves, *Pascentes cum Disciplina*, 258.

more broadly. Christian bishops, as priests, are the liturgical leaders of the church.

Christian Priests: Administrative Rulers of the Church

Having demonstrated Cyprian's tendency to explain the bishop's priestly functions more broadly in terms of liturgical leadership, rather than narrowly focused on Eucharistic sacrifice, there is a second important aspect of Cyprian's understanding of priesthood needing consideration, one which is often overlooked. Traditionally, scholars like Georg Schöllgen, have concluded that the duties of the bishop and clergy in early Christianity are "exclusively liturgical-sacral."[35] They serve the altar and sacrifice, and minister heavenly things day and night. This is true; however, the bishop, according to Cyprian, is also a priest because of his divinely appointed authority to rule over the church as its guardian and judge.

Cyprian is quite clear about his expectations of behavior and attitude toward the bishop: one should "give honor to the priest of God."[36] One owes the bishop "the honor of his priesthood and his throne."[37] Those who resist the decision of the bishops are in revolt, and as a result "all the sacerdotal authority and power is being destroyed."[38] The authority of the bishop-priest, however, does not derive from human power; rather, Cyprian grounds this authority in Old Testament Scriptures and examples. In a response to the bishop Rogatianus, Cyprian writes that he was "disturbed to read your letter in which you complain about your deacon who harasses you, disregarding your sacerdotal office (*sacerdotalis loci*) and forgetting his own duty and ministry." Cyprian reminds Rogatianus that "you had the power, by the vigor of your episcopate and by the authority of your chair which you possess, to punish him immediately."[39] In fact, says Cyprian, "in your sacerdotal power (*sacerdotali potentate*) you have divine commands (*praecepta divina*) concerning men

35 "... ausschliesslich liturgisch-sakral." Georg Schöllgen, *Die Anfänge der Professionalisierung des Klerus und das kirchliche Amt in der syrischen Didaskalie* (Munster: Aschendorffsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1998), 60. See Adrien Demoustier who also sees *sacerdos* as primarily concerned with the liturgical life ("L'ontologie de l'église," 570).

36 *Ep.* 15.1.2, *CCSL* 3B: 86. See also Colin Bulley, *Priesthood*, 118–119 for a brief discussion of this aspect of the bishop's priesthood.

37 *Ep.* 17.2.1, *CCSL* 3B: 97.

38 *Ep.* 43.3.2, *CCSL* 3B: 203.

39 *Ep.* 3.1.1, *CCSL* 3B: 9.

of this sort, since the Lord God says in Deuteronomy, 'And whatever man acts in arrogance such that he does not heed the priest (*sacerdotem*) or judge (*iudicem*)… that man shall die.'"[40] Cyprian then provides another Scriptural example to bolster his claim: when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram resisted the high priest Aaron "who was placed in command, the earth opened up, engulfed and devoured them and they were punished…"[41] The bishops of the church, in their priestly office, have authority and power within the church, not just to rule but to discipline as well. Laity and clergy alike must give them their proper respect and obedience.[42] This last text in particular demonstrates Cyprian's notion that the administrative authority of a bishop is strongly connected to his authority as a priest.

According to Cyprian, however, that authority resides specifically in the bishop's role as protector of the church's true worship. They are not to wield power and authority for personal gain, but rather, to protect God's flock. As von Campenhausen correctly observes, "Cyprian knows of no operation of the priestly quality independent from his official place and function in the entire community."[43] The authority of the bishop lies in close connection with his task to protect the church community. This aspect of priestly leadership and protection emerges clearly in a letter to Quintus in which Cyprian discusses the validity of schismatic baptism. Although some in the church declared it unnecessary to re-baptize schismatics who convert to the catholic church, Cyprian vehemently argues that this was not the decision of the council of bishops held in Carthage. "Consequently," says Cyprian, "as priests of God (*sacerdotes Dei*) who from his honor are made the leaders (*praepositi*) of his church, we should know that forgiveness of sins (*remissam peccatorum*) cannot be given except in the church, nor can the enemies of Christ lay claim for themselves any share in his grace."[44] This passage offers a unique blend of the bishop's tasks: Cyprian speaks on the one hand of their being "leaders

40 *Ep.* 3.1.1, *CCSL* 3B: 10. See Deuteronomy 17:12.

41 *Ep.* 3.1.2, *CCSL* 3B: 11. See Numbers 16.

42 Colin Bulley points out that "there was a close link in his [Cyprian's] mind between the bishop's priesthood and his sacred authority, which link probably increased his predilection for this designation in situations which threatened his authority" (*Priesthood*, 114).

43 "Cyprian kennt keine Wirkung der priesterlichen Qualität unabhängig von der amtlichen Stellung und Funktion im Ganzen der Gemeinde." Hans von Campenhausen, *Kirchliches Amt und geistliche Vollmacht in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1963), 299.

44 *Ep.* 71.3.2, *CCSL* 3C : 521.

of his church" (a more administrative role in their judicial capacity) and on the other hand about their role in granting forgiveness (i.e. in administering penance), a more liturgical role. Yet, strikingly, both of these functions fall under his designation of bishops as the *sacerdotes Dei*. The priestly aspect of the bishop, then, holds both liturgical and administrative functions for Cyprian.[45]

Indeed, for Cyprian these two aspects of leadership are not sharply differentiated in his mind. While A. D'Alès would suggest that Cyprian uses the term *episcopus* "to express the power of governance" and *sacerdos* "to express the functions of the divine cult"[46] Cyprian's own writings, as we have seen, suggest rather that *sacerdos* entails both liturgical *and* administrative functions of the bishop. Thus von Campenhausen's observations appear correct that "at its root Cyprian's thinking about the church is decidedly both sacral-juridical and sacral-political."[47] Cyprian's understanding of the bishop-as-priest entails both a sacred, liturgical element, but also an element of governance and administration. For example, Cyprian endows the bishop with the responsibility of guarding and protecting the church's worship. He explains their responsibility this way: "The camp of Christ is invincible and steadfast; being fortified by the protection of the Lord, it does not yield to threats. The priest of God (*sacerdos Dei*) who possesses the gospel and guards the commands of Christ can be killed, but not defeated."[48] Cyprian then illustrates this with the example of Zechariah the priest: "when he could not be terrified by threats and stonings, he was murdered in the temple of God (*in templo Dei*) …"[49] Like the Israelite priests of old who were to guard the Temple of God and preserve the worship that took place within it, so too Cyprian calls upon the Christian *sacerdos Dei* to guard and protect the church from those who would force

45 For biblical examples of priestly tasks including administrative, not just liturgical, duties, see again similar conclusions in my earlier chapter on Origen.

46 D'Alès, *Cyprien*, 310. "… exprime un pouvoir de gouvernement" and "… exprime les fonctions du culte divin." See also G.W. Clarke, *The Epistles*, vol. 3, 319, n.4 who makes the identical point.

47 "Das kirchliche Denken Cyprians ist also in der Wurzel sacral-juridisch und sacral-politisch bestimmt." von Campenhausen, *Kirchliches Amt*, 297.

48 *Ep*. 59.17.1, *CCSL* 3C: 367.

49 *Ep*. 59.17.1, *CCSL* 3C: 368. See 2 Chronicles 24:20–22. This also works well for material culture (see below). Earlier in Ep. 59.16.2 Cyprian speaks of the threshold of the church (*limen ecclesiae*). Taken together these texts seem to indicate a physical guardianship of the church from heretics. The use of Zechariah in the Temple helps highlight this point.

entrance and desecrate their worship. As Otto Ritschl has observed, "it would be incorrect to remain satisfied with a strict separation of the dual episcopal duties, the cultic and the ecclesial administration. For at least in Cyprian's understanding of the episcopal office, there is no separation."[50] The Christian bishop-priest is the protector of Christian worship, a role which combines administrative judgment and liturgical responsibilities.

Within this same epistle, Cyprian bemoans the situation in which those outside the church have done away with penance and public confession of sin, mocked the bishops, and then offered communion to any who would have it. Cyprian reflects upon this situation and concludes: the bishops should reject such practices because "the greater burden [in dealing with this situation] falls upon the priests (*sacerdotibus*) to protect and attend to the majesty of God."[51] The bishops exercise their priestly duty by protecting the church from liturgical aberrations. In doing so, says Cyprian, they are protecting the very "glory of our sovereign God."[52] Of course, the biblical depiction of Israelite priests comports very well with this picture. Numbers 3:8 commands that the priests are "to take care of all the furnishings of the Tent of Meeting, fulfilling the obligations of the Israelites by doing the work of the tabernacle." Later in Ezekiel, the priests are described as those "in charge of the temple" and "in charge of the altar." Again, God declares through Ezekiel: "I will put them in charge of the duties of the temple" (44:14). Thus Cyprian's portrayal of the bishop's tasks, like those of the Old Testament priests, involves a protective or guardianship responsibility centered on Christian worship.

This is especially true in the bishop's task of holding councils and making judgments about who is admitted to church and who is excluded. Bishops have the responsibility, as priests, to judge and make decisions. In cases dealing with individuals who "have refused to obey their bishops and priests (*sacerdotibus*)" Cyprian assures his readers that "we cannot admit them into the church."[53] Elsewhere, Cyprian addresses the problem of certain leaders allowing lapsed

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50 "Es unrichtig sein würde, wenn wir bei der strikten Scheidung der beiden Seiten der bischöflichen Tätigkeit, der cultischen und der kirchenleitenden, stehen bleiben wollten. Denn in dem Bewusstsein, welches Cyprian von seinem Amte als Bischof hat, giebt es wenigstens keine solche Trennung" Otto Ritschl, *Cyprian von Karthago und die Verfassung der Kirche: Eine kirchengeschichtliche und kirchenrechtliche Untersuchung* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht's Verlag, 1885), 220–221.

51 *Ep.* 59.13.5, *CCSL* 3C: 360.

52 *Ep.* 59.13.5, *CCSL* 3C: 360.

53 *Ep.* 4.4.2, *CCSL* 3B: 23.

laity into communion too easily, bypassing the necessity of "making satisfaction to the Lord through the bishops and priests (*sacerdotes*)."[54] The bishops are the gatekeepers of the church. To bypass these leaders, says Cyprian, is in direct contradiction to the firm decision of the universal clergy and confessors. "Against this decision (*consilium*) of ours they now rebel and all the sacerdotal authority and power (*sacerdotalis auctoritas et potestas*) is being destroyed by these seditious conspirators."[55] In other words, one of the main priestly tasks of the bishops, according to Cyprian, was their judicial role in deciding who was to be re-admitted into the church. They exercised this role, according to this passage, both in an administrative way via a council of bishops, and in a more liturgical manner via the sacrament of penance (what Cyprian most likely means in his reference to "making satisfaction to the Lord through the bishops and priests").

Thus the bishops are priests, in Cyprian's eyes, because of their liturgical functions (leaders of worship) and their administrative functions (their authority to lead the church and to hold judgment). Upon close examination of the texts, these two functional categories are for Cyprian quite inter-related. Bishops are "God's own attendants (*dispensatores*),"[56] leading and governing the church of God both in its liturgical and its juridical-administrative elements. This dual perspective on sacerdotal duties is nowhere exhibited more clearly than in Cyprian's words to Stephen the bishop of Rome:

> We ought to gather together and investigate (*considerare*) [heresy]… We who are with the Lord and hold to the unity of the Lord and administer his priesthood (*sacerdotium eius administramus*) in the church according to his honor, ought to repudiate, reject and hold as profane whatever his enemies and antichrists do. Likewise, to those who depart from error and depravity, and acknowledge the true faith of the one church, we ought to give the truth of unity and faith through all the sacraments of divine grace (*omnia divinae gratiae sacramenta*).[57]

Bishops "administer the priesthood" both in their role as a council of judges (rejecting and repudiating enemies of Christ) and in their performance of the

54 *Ep.* 43.3.2, *CCSL* 3B: 203. Given Cyprian's reticence elsewhere to speak of the presbyter as a *sacerdos*, I take the phrase "bishops and priests" as epexigetical, two terms referring to the same thing.

55 *Ep.* 43.3.2, *CCSL* 3B: 203.

56 *Ep.* 59.5.2, *CCSL* 3C: 345.

57 *Ep.* 70.3.3, *CCSL* 3C: 513–515.

"sacred ceremonies." Their liturgical priesthood is inextricably tied to their administrative priesthood. Texts such as these provide an important and necessary corrective to the typical understanding of the priesthood in Cyprian as one that centers solely on the Eucharist as sacrifice. To be sure, the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice is one of the functions of the bishop-priest in Cyprian's mind. It is not, however, the sole priestly function, or even the primary one. A closer examination of the texts reveals that for Cyprian, the bishop was a priest in a much broader sense, just as the priest of the Old Testament did more than perform the sacrifices. Like the Old Testament priests, the Christian bishop presides over all of Christian worship, which is by its very nature sacrificial; he protects the church by enforcing his authority to admit or exclude individuals from worship; he governs the church by convening councils and making important decisions about how the church will be run and how the sacraments will be administered to the people of God. All of these functions, in a nexus of liturgical and administrative tasks, paint the comprehensive picture of the Christian bishop as a *sacerdos* for Cyprian. Thus, similar to Origen, Cyprian allows the Old Testament biblical picture of priestly leadership to shape his own portrayal and understanding of Christian leadership; yet the actual practice and functions of the Christian bishop also work to stretch the Old Testament priestly models to fit the contemporary office. There is, of course, an underlying ecclesiological catalyst for Cyprian's understanding of the Christian bishop as priest, and to that dimension of thought we turn next.

Religio-Political Ecclesiology: Continuity with Israel

That Cyprian's ecclesiology has been "the most famous aspect of [his] thought"[58] is certainly true, especially his well-known assertion that there is "no salvation outside the church" and that one cannot have God as Father without having the church as mother.[59] As significant as these aspects are for Cyprian's ecclesiology, his understanding of the continuity between Israel and the church is even more important for his understanding of Christian priesthood. It should be clear by now that when Cyprian speaks of the bishops as priests, he has in mind the Israelite priesthood. In every instance where

58 Wiles, *Theological Legacy*, 142.

59 See *De Unit.* 6 & *Ep.* 74.7.2

Cyprian attempts to justify his conception of the Christian ministerial priesthood, he grounds his ideas in the Old Testament commands, injunctions and descriptions about the Levitical priesthood. This accepted connection between old and new covenant leadership is so strong that Cyprian does not hesitate to apply Old Testament commands directly to the Christian bishop.

For example, Cyprian connects Christian bishops and Old Testament priests and spiritual leaders by referring to the latter as "our predecessors (*antecessores nostra*)."[60] Elsewhere, Cyprian explains the injunction that the Levites were not to possess any land: "The Levites previously held a pattern (*formam*) of this arrangement and sanction in the Law, so that when the eleven tribes divided the land and distributed the property, the tribe of Levi, which was dedicated to the temple and the altar and the sacred duties, secured nothing from that share of distribution."[61] Cyprian strengthens his point by asserting: "This rule and pattern (*forma*) is held now in the clergy (*in clero*)… They are not to withdraw from the altar and sacrifices, but day and night serve heavenly and spiritual matters."[62] Instead, the congregation must provide for the needs of the clergy. Clearly, Cyprian understands the Christian bishop as an image reflecting the model of Levitical priesthood in the Old Testament. Georg Schöllgen summarizes well this passage:

> This rule is attributed directly to divine *auctoritas* and *dispositio* and has the purpose to ensure that the Levites are neither distracted nor forced away from the *operationis divinae*, to think or to do *saecularia*. Cyprian sees no difficulty in transferring the Old Testament tithing commands to the church. What was true for the Levites back then, is true for the clergy today.[63]

Cyprian makes this explicit by a direct connection between the services and duties of the Levites (altar, sacrifices and sacred offices) on the one hand, and the duties of the Christian priest (altar and sacrifice) on the other; and between the Levitical commands not to own land, on the one hand, and the

60 *Ep.* 8.1.1, *CCSL* 3B: 40.

61 *Ep.* 1.1.2, *CCSL* 3B: 2.

62 *Ep.* 1.1.2, *CCSL* 3B: 3.

63 "Diese Regel wird ausdrücklich auf goettliche *auctoritas* und *dispositio* zurückgeführt und verfolgt den Zweck, sicherzustellen, dass die Leviten weder von den *operationis divinae* abgelenkt noch gezwungen werden, *saecularia* zu denken oder zu tun. Cyprian sieht keine Schwierigkeiten, das alttestamentliche Zehntgebot auf die Kirche zu übertragen. Was damals für die Leviten galt, gilt heute für den Klerus." Schöllgen, *Die Anfänge*, 59.

requirement of Christian leaders not to be involved in mundane affairs, on the other.[64] What is more, Cyprian suggests another parallel between Old Testament priests and Christian clergy in this text, namely, the responsibility to be dedicated to spiritual things "day and night." In Leviticus, Aaron, continually supervising the lamps of the Tabernacle, is instructed "to keep it in order from evening until morning before the LORD" (24:2–4). Exodus 30:7–8 commands Aaron the priest to burn incense on the altar in the morning and at evening, whereas Numbers 28:1–8 gives similar instructions for the daily sacrifices, "morning and evening." The reference in Cyprian's epistle to Christian clergy attending to spiritual things "day and night" evokes this connection with the Israelite priesthood.

Similarly, Cyprian's repeated description of the Christian bishop echoes the description of Israelite priests: Christian priests are the ones who "wait on the altar and the sacrifices (*altari et sacrificiis deserviunt*);"[65] they "do service at the altar and celebrate the divine sacrifices (*sacrificia divina celebrare*);"[66] and they are described as the "attendants of God (*dispensatores Dei*)."[67] The Old Testament evocations are clear. For example, Deuteronomy 10:8 describes the tribe of Levi as set apart "to stand before the LORD to minister to him" (Vulgate: *staret coram eo in ministerio*), and Deuteronomy 18:5 explains the privilege of the Levites as ones "chosen to stand and minister in the name of the LORD" (*ut stet et ministret*). The rhetorical echoes here between Old Testament Israelite priests and Cyprian's Christian priests are striking and suggest a fundamental connection between the two.

Liturgical functions are not the only point of relationship, for Cyprian also connects old and new ministerial leadership along issues of authority as well. In Epistle 3, as we have seen, Cyprian emphasizes the authority of the bishop to "exact immediate punishment" from the wayward by citing Deuteronomy 17:12, a favorite of Cyprian, saying,

> In fact, you have divine commands (*praecepta divina*) concerning men of this sort, since the Lord God says in Deuteronomy, "And whatever man acts in arrogance such that he does not heed the priest (*sacerdotem*) or judge (*iudicem*)… that man shall die,

64 Cyprian is addressing here the question of whether Christian clergy should be appointed guardian or trustees in a will. Cyprian's point is that they should not, because that would distract them from their commitments as clergy.

65 *Ep.* 72.2.2, *CCSL* 3C: 526.

66 *Ep.* 67.1.2, *CCSL* 3C: 448.

67 *Ep.* 59.5.2, *CCSL* 3C : 345.

> and when all the people hear of it, they will be afraid and will refrain from impiety from that point on."[68]

He then draws upon the example of Korah, Dathan and Abiram who were punished for their resistance to Aaron the priest. This example, says Cyprian, proves that "priests of God (*sacerdotes Dei*) are shown to be vindicated by him who makes them priests (*sacerdotes*)."[69] His point, of course, is that just as the Levitical priesthood was appointed by God himself and therefore to be obeyed, so too the Christian bishop-priests have been appointed by God and ought to be obeyed. His argument only works, however, when his understood connection between old priestly leadership and the Christian leadership of the bishop is assumed.

Another example of Cyprian's appropriation of Levitical commands has to do with ordination. Cyprian writes:

> We see that the practice of choosing a priest in the presence of the people under the eyes of all comes down from divine authority… just as the Lord commands Moses in the book of Numbers saying: 'Take Aaron your brother and Eliezer his son, and place them on the mountain before all the assembled people.'[70]

The reason, says Cyprian, that "the whole [Christian] congregation was called together" was because in the passage in Numbers "God commands that the priest is to be ordained before all the assembled people."[71] Again, Cyprian's working assumption is that God's commands about the Levitical priesthood have application to the Christian episcopacy, and that Old Testament commands about public ordination dictate similar regulations for Christian clergy, the new Levitical priests of the people of God. A public ordination for Levites means that bishops, the Christian priests, must also be ordained publicly.

Returning again to the liturgical aspect of priesthood, in Epistle 67, Cyprian speaks of the requirement for purity among Christian clergy, saying

> Long ago the voice of heaven and the law of God commanded (*mandatur*) and ordered (*praescribitur*) who and what sort of men ought to serve the altar and celebrate sacred sacrifices. For in Exodus God speaks to Moses and warns him, saying, "Let the priests (*sacerdotes*) who approach the Lord God be sanctified lest the Lord perhaps

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68 *Ep.* 3.1.1, *CCSL* 3B: 10.
69 *Ep.* 3.1.2, *CCSL* 3B: 11.
70 *Ep.* 67.4.1, *CCSL* 3C: 452.
71 *Ep.* 67.4.4 & 67.4.2, *CCSL* 3C: 453, 452.

> should forsake them" (Exod. 19:22). And again: "When they approach to minister at the altar (*ministrare ad altare*) of the holy place (*sancti*), they shall not bring sin upon themselves lest they should die" (Exod. 30:20). And likewise in Leviticus the Lord commands saying: "The man in whom there has been any blemish or sin shall not approach to offer gifts to God" (Lev. 21:17).[72]

Lest there be any question whether Cyprian thinks these commands apply, he continues "Since these have been prescribed and commanded to us (*nobis*), it is necessary that we subject our obedience to these divine commands."[73] For Cyprian, what was "commanded and ordered" for the Levites has direct application for the church.

In other words, Cyprian takes the commands to the Levitical priesthood and applies them to Christian bishops because he assumes a strong continuity between Israel and the church. Commands to one can be appropriated and applied as commands to the other. Again in *De Lapsis* 7 Cyprian comments that "the prophets predicted constant oppression by the Gentiles,"[74] a subtle but important rhetorical assumption that the church (who are nearly all, by Cyprian's time, gentiles) now equals Israel and the "gentiles" who oppress "Israel" are the pagans and schismatics. His approach to Scripture then, as M.F. Wiles puts it, "is that of a man who collects a series of texts to provide clear-cut answers to the theological, and still more the practical, questions of the moment."[75]

That religio-political ecclesiology has received very little scholarly attention, despite its centrality to Cyprian's understanding of Christian ministry as a priesthood.[76] In some cases, the validity of the Old Testament's influence on Cyprian has been downplayed significantly. In his most recent work on Cyprian, for example, Allen Brent argues that despite Cyprian's post-conversion Christian rhetoric, he is still influenced primarily by secular models of Roman law. Brent rightly points out some of the parallels between

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72 *Ep.* 67.1.2, *CCSL* 3C: 448.

73 *Ep.* 67.2.1, *CCSL* 3C: 448.

74 *De Lap.* 7, *CCSL* 3 : 224.

75 Wiles, *Theological Legacy*, 141.

76 There is still the broader question as to what determines for Cyprian which Old Testament commands carried over to the church and which are abrogated. Although not the focus of this project, it would be an interesting study to explore. Of course, even in his appropriation of priestly commands and injunctions, Cyprian clearly does not accept *carte blanche* the Levitical priesthood with its hereditary lineage, bloody sacrifices, etc. Even at this point there is appropriation *and* transformation of the old system.

Cyprian's understanding of authority and third-century Roman views, especially the notion that legitimate authority was to be exercised "within a territorial space made sacred by due religious ritual;" as a result, Brent concludes: "Cyprian's view of Church Order reflects this general background of Roman constitutional law with its concept of sacred space defining religiously as well as politically the magistrate's sphere of influence."[77]

Despite these compelling observations and comparisons, Brent's conclusion seems to undermine the influence of the Christian Scriptures on Cyprian's thought. As he asserts: "Such a pagan view of political authority, and its authentication in pagan cultic ritual, has left its form on Cyprian's ecclesiology of Church Order, however masked under a veil of Old Testament exegesis such a pagan political theology may be."[78] For Brent, Cyprian's attempts to appeal to the Old Testament in order to bolster his understanding of Christian church order are actually contrived attempts to veil the real influence—Roman political ideals. There is little room here for a genuine influence of the Christian Scriptures on Cyprian, despite Cyprian's own attestation to the contrary.

Such a conclusion seems far too one-sided. Certainly the secular, political context of third-century Rome played an influence on the bishop Cyprian. Brent's work demonstrates well the ways Cyprian's understanding of episcopal authority may have reflected current "Roman jurisprudential principles."[79] Indeed, despite Cyprian's attempt to distance himself from his former world, Brent correctly identifies subtle ways that Cyprian's milieu informed his own thinking about Christian structures of authority. Yet as this entire chapter has shown, Cyprian was clearly influenced by the Christian sacred scriptures as well. In particular, his understanding of a Christian priesthood draws quite heavily upon the Old Testament Levitical priesthood as an important model. To deny this influence on Cyprian (one which Cyprian himself so clearly and openly communicates) is to open oneself to the accusation of affirming only the influences that remain unstated (the Roman political world) while denying those influences which are explicitly indicated (the Levitical paradigms in the Old Testament).[80]

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77 Allen Brent, *Cyprian*, 24.

78 Brent, *Cyprian*, 24.

79 Brent, *Cyprian*, 1.

80 Or worse yet, to pretend to be able to know the mind of Cyprian better than Cyprian himself, something Brent very clearly wants to avoid doing (*Cyprian*, 42). For further

When it comes to Cyprian's views of ecclesial authority in general, we are perhaps better off to call Cyprian, in the words of Vincent Hunink, "a man of two faces"[81] (both Roman and Christian); but when it comes to Cyprian's understanding of the bishop as a priest, his religio-political ecclesiology which finds connection between Israel and the church, particularly the institution of the Levitical priesthood, lays the far greater claim to influence upon Cyprian. It is precisely because the church is portrayed in continuity with Israel (including her rights and institutions, her history and her Scriptures) that Cyprian feels justified in calling the Christian bishop a priest.

For example, Cyprian is quite explicit about the connection between Israel and the church in his treatise addressed to Fortunatus, *Exhortation to Martyrdom*. There he writes that in the Exodus, "the Jewish people were prefigured as a shadow and image of us (*ad umbram nostri et imaginem praefiguratus*)."[82] This notion of the Old Testament being full of shadows (*umbrae*) and images (*imagines*) is a common hermeneutical approach of Cyprian's. Fahey observes that Cyprian attempts to "present the unity of the whole Scriptural revelation."[83] All of Scripture was about Christ and his church. Beyond the Christological focus, however, Fahey also notes that Cyprian "came to find in the OT through the same method Christian teachings and regulations about baptism, the Eucharist, and the priesthood."[84] As much as the Old Testament was about Christ, it was also about the church (and all of the rites and institutions within it).[85]

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evidence that Cyprian was deeply influenced by the Christian scriptures after his conversion, see Pontius, *Vita Cypriani* 2.2–3 where Pontius explains that Cyprian turned from his old ways to "the sacred knowledge" from the reading of Scripture. If Cyprian did indeed steep himself in the sacred text of the Old and New Testaments, surely such reading (including its own cultural life, stories, hierarchies, etc) would begin to influence Cyprian as much as his former Roman juridical life.

81 Vincent Hunink, "St. Cyprian, a Christian and Roman Gentlemen," in *Cyprian of Carthage: Studies in His Life, Language, and Thought*, eds. Bakker et al (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 41.

82 *Ad Fort.* 7, *CCSL* 3: 194.

83 Fahey, *Cyprian*, 626.

84 Fahey, *Cyprian*, 625.

85 In *Epistle* 63, Cyprian works out an extended typological fulfillment between Melchizedek and Christ, and between the offering of Melchizedek (bread and wine) and the Christian Eucharist. He says, "Likewise in the priest Melchizedek we see foreshadowed in mystery a type (*sacramentum praefiguratum*) of the Lord's sacrifice... And indeed Melchizedek portrayed a type of Christ (*typum Christi*)." He further explains: "who is more a priest of the God most high than our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered a sacrifice to God the Father and offered

Returning to the subject of a Christian priesthood, one can see that Cyprian is employing essentially the same approach. What was recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures acts as a figure for what was to come later. As Vilela suggests, "the Levites of the ancient Law were envisaged as the type, the biblical *forma*, of the members of the hierarchy of the New Testament."[86] As Cyprian himself says, "The Levites previously held a pattern (*formam*) of this arrangement and sanction in the Law" such that "this rule and pattern (*forma*) is held now in the clergy (*in clero*)…"[87] What makes the bishop-priest connection work for Cyprian is his conceptual understanding of continuity between Israel and the church worked out in a typological appropriation of Levitical priesthood for Christian leadership. Thus, by examining the roles and functions of the Christian bishop (offering sacrifices, presiding over worship, ruling the people, acting as judge), Cyprian finds echoes and fulfillments of the earlier Israelite priesthood. Because this connection is so evident to Cyprian, Maurice Wiles has suggested that "the theological justification of Cyprian's idea of the ministry is solidly based upon a literal application of Old Testament texts concerning the Jewish priesthood to the Christian ministry."[88] Yet, I would clarify Wiles' comments by noting that this application is cast squarely in terms of a fulfillment and *transformation* of the old priesthood, not merely a literal appropriation. There are sufficient

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the very offering which Melchizedek offered, that is, bread and wine…" (*Ep.* 63.4.1, *CCSL* 3C: 392–93). The Old Testament contains types and shadows of things to come.

Likewise, Cyprian (and the North African church as a whole) seems to accept an interpretation of continuity between old covenant circumcision and Christian baptism. In *Epistle* 64, Cyprian addresses the question of whether clergy should wait to baptize infants until the eighth day, because of the circumcision law about waiting until the eighth day. The assumption behind this question is that there is continuity between the initiatory rite of circumcision in Israel and the initiatory rite of baptism in the church. Cyprian's response is interesting. While he rejects the need to wait until the eighth day, it is not on the basis that circumcision does not prefigure baptism, but on the basis that "it is not right to refuse the mercy and grace of God to any man that is born" (*Ep.* 64.2.1, *CCSL* 3C: 419). Although Cyprian does not use the language of typology or prefiguration here, it is clear that the logic of the issue rests on an assumption of continuity between the rite of the old covenant people of God and the rite of the new covenant people of God.

86 "Les Levites de l'ancienne Loi envisages comme le type, la *forma* biblique, des membres de la hierarchie dans le Nouveau Testament." Vilela, *La condition collegiale*, 325.

87 *Ep.* 1.1.2, *CCSL* 3B: 2–3.

88 Wiles, *Theological Legacy*, 144–145.

changes from the old Levitical priesthood to the Christian priesthood so that the Christian priesthood is less a literal application than a metaphorical and typological *fulfillment* of the Levitical priesthood based upon the accepted continuity between Israel and the church.[89] There is appropriation *and* transformation.

I should note in passing, too, that Cyprian's appropriation of the Old Testament text, while certainly theologically significant, was also sociologically pointed as well. A number of scholars have observed that there was a large Jewish population in North Africa during the third century and that Jews maintained an active presence in cities such as Carthage.[90] Cyprian's use of the *Testimonia*, his appropriation of Jewish Scriptures, and his assertion of continuity between Israel and the church—all of this was not an argument in the abstract, but the product of a real, ongoing debate between two people groups, both laying claim to the same texts, both asserting their legitimacy as God's people. As W. C. H. Frend helpfully reminds us, "In these circumstances, the rivalry and enmity between the two communities that existed even in Cyprian's time can well be understood."[91] Cyprian's assertions of continuity between church and Israel was not just a religious or theological claim; it was a claim to be the embodiment and continuation of a real history, people, laws, and institutions (including a priestly office).

This point moves us to another significant aspect of the church's developing ecclesiology, that of a concrete material culture and seeing the church as a distinct *polis* occupying real physical, sociological space in the empire. This aspect of Cyprian's ecclesiology lies as an important backdrop for our study of the ministerial priesthood as well.

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89 For example, Cyprian nowhere expects Christian priesthood to be maintained through hereditary lineage, nor does he argue for the continuation of bloody animal sacrifices or grain offerings as prescribed in the Old Testament.

90 See for example, W.C.H. Frend who points out the existence of a large Jewish cemetery in Carthage at this time ("Jews and Christians in Third Century Carthage," in *Paganisme, Judaisme, Christianisme: Influences et affrontements dans le monde antique*, eds. Frederick Bruce, et al (Paris: Editions de Boccard, 1978), 187. Also see Robert Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind* (New Haven: Yale U.P., 1971), 19; *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, vol. 6.1, s.v. "Gamart ;" vol. 2.2, s.v. "Carthage." For more on the influence of Jews on Christians in Carthage, see Anneliese Adolph, *Die Theologie der Einheit der Kirche bei Cyprian* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 84; and Wiles, *Theological Legacy*, 144.

91 Frend, "Jews and Christian," 193. See also, Peter Bingham Hincliff, *Cyprian of Carthage and the Unity of the Christian Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman Pub., 1974), 103.

A Christian Material Culture and Sacred Space

It is necessary at this point to be reminded of Peter Leithart's conclusion, discussed previously in chapter three, that an Israelite priest was one "who has been given permanent standing—both literally and metaphorically—in the house of God, and whose duties range from personal attendance upon Yahweh to stewardship and care of his house."[92] In essence, Old Testament priests had functions and responsibilities that took place in a specific location: the Temple of God (and before that, the Tabernacle). As such, their role as priests entailed the care of Israelite sacred space and sacred objects within the house of God. Leithart illustrates this point with Ezekiel 44 where the idolatrous Levites are called into judgment for failing in their duties "in the house of the Lord." Their judgment: "They shall not come near to me, to serve me as priest, nor come near any of my sacred things (LXX: *ta hagia*/ Vulgate: *ad omne sanctuarium meum*)" (44:13). A few verses later, Ezekiel draws a contrast with the faithful Zadokites who "shall come near to me to minister to me, and they shall attend on me… and they shall enter my sanctuary (LXX: *ta hagia mou*/ Vulgate: *sanctuarium meum*) and they shall approach my table (LXX: *trapedzan mou*/ Vulgate: *mensam meam*) …" (44:15–16). Thus this centrality of space and place in the role of the Old Testament priest leads Leithart to conclude that "the distinction between priestly and non-priestly ministry is a matter of location in sacred space…"[93]

We turn now to an examination of Cyprian's portrayal of Christian priesthood in light of this distinguishing aspect of "sacred space" and "sacred things." Does the cultural setting of third-century Carthage, or even Cyprian himself, suggest this physical, material dimension of responsibility for the Christian priest?

Archaeological Evidence

Broadly speaking, Michael White concludes that "By the third century, then, Christian buildings in many areas of the empire were becoming recognizable landmarks even though they had not yet begun to achieve monumental

92 Peter Leithart, "Attendants of Yahweh's House: Priesthood in the Old Testament," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 85 (1999):18–19.

93 Leithart, "Attendants," 19.

architectural definition."[94] Likewise, Richard Krautheimer suggests that by this same period, "congregations became increasingly organized and expanded their activities of divine worship and care of souls to include charity, the tending of cemeteries, [and] the administration of property…"[95] and that "the large Christian congregations of the Empire, by AD 250, certainly did not live in hiding. They held services, proselytized, baptized, buried their dead, assisted their needy—and to these ends owned property, either legally or by sufferance."[96] Furthermore, Christian worship in particular had begun to take shape in noticeably distinct spatial terms. Krautheimer again: "The assembly room, no longer a dining room, had to be large, easily accessible, and divided between clergy and laymen. The bishop, flanked by his presbyters, would preside over the assembly from a platform (*tribunal, solium*)… The furniture was simple, presumably wooden and moveable: the bishop's chair, a table (*mensa*) for the Eucharist, and a second table for the offerings…"[97] All of this indicates that Christianity was emerging as a distinct, identifiable social group with property, furniture, rituals and laws. It was, in this sense, a "culture" or *polis* of its own within the empire.

This depiction of the church as a *polis* with an emerging Christian material culture is exactly what we find in the archaeological evidence available in Carthage. Recall, for example, the excavation site at Damous el-Karita (dated to the late second or early third century) which contained a church, a baptistery, a cemetery, and other structures.[98] The existence of these Christian material artifacts indicates an emerging Christian culture that was physical and material. Moreover, as a number of scholars have observed, North Africa during the second and third century was a rather wealthy province, based largely on their agricultural success.[99] It would be no surprise that such wealth would produce material prosperity for Christians, including church buildings

94 L. Michael White, *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture*, vol. 1 (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1996), 123.

95 Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1965), 3.

96 Krautheimer, *ECBA*, 4.

97 Krautheimer, *ECBA*, 5.

98 See Chapter 2 on Tertullian for a discussion there. See esp. *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, vol. 2.2, s.v. "Carthage."

99 See for example, Victor Saxer, *Vie liturgique et quotidienne à Carthage vers le milieu du IIIe siècle: le témoignage de saint Cyprien et de ses contemporains d'Afrique*, 2nd ed. (Rome: Citta del Vaticano, 1984), 6–7; Sage, *Cyprian*, 29–30.

and other forms of property. What evidence does Cyprian supply about this phenomenon?

Literary Evidence

In fact, Cyprian does give indication in his writings of such a material Christian culture. In Epistle 12, Cyprian commends "our most faithful and devoted brother Tertullus" who provides diligent service "concerning the care of the dead in Carthage."[100] It appears from this text, and others like it,[101] that Christian cemeteries did in fact exist in Carthage at this time, cemeteries for which Christian leaders were responsible to provide care and maintenance.[102]

As to worship space, Cyprian also gives indication that this was more than just an assembly in the private homes of Christian members. Rather, the picture that emerges is one of physicality and a defined sense of worship "space." For example, Cyprian commends Aurelius to his congregation. Twice a confessor of the faith during the persecution, Aurelius is now made a reader in the church. Cyprian offers a comparison between Aurelius' speaking as a confessor and his role as a reader: "after speaking out the sublime words concerning the witness of Christ, he moves to read the Gospel of Christ whereby men became martyrs; after the martyr's scaffold he moves to the pulpit (*ad pulpitum*)—on the one he could be seen by crowds of pagans, on the other he can be seen by his brothers."[103] Again in Epistle 39, Cyprian likewise commends Celerinus, saying "It is fitting for him to be placed on nothing other than the pulpit (*super pulpitum*), that is, on the platform of the church (*super tribunal ecclesiae*). In this way, elevated by his lofty position (*celsitate*) and seen by all the people on account of the clarity of his honor, he may read the commands and gospel of the Lord."[104] As Michael White remarks, "by the years 250–252 it can be determined that the area physically defined for assembly was sufficiently large to accommodate a segregated area for the clergy and a raised platform, called the pulpit or tribunal."[105] What we have, then, in Cyprian is a

100 *Ep.* 12.2.1, *CCSL* 3B : 69–70.
101 See for example, *Ep.* 8.3.2
102 Consider also the evidence of Christian cemeteries in Carthage in the earlier chapter on Tertullian (chapter 2).
103 *Ep.* 38.2.1, *CCSL* 3B: 184–85.
104 *Ep.* 39.4.1, *CCSL* 3B: 190.
105 White, *Social Origins*, vol. 1, 124.

description of some of the physical furniture within the church building itself. The *pulpitum*, for example, served to physically elevate the speaker within the place of Christian worship.

Like the *pulpitum*, Cyprian speaks of another important piece of liturgical furniture, the *altar*. Although some texts can be taken to mean a metaphorical altar, Cyprian often has in mind the physical, material table used for Eucharistic worship. For example, Cyprian speaks of the "solemn church gathering" in which "the priests of God were seated together and where the altar was set up (*altari posito*)."[106] Here, Cyprian speaks of a physical "altar" which must be "set up" for worship, a material object used in the Christian worship space. As Franz Wieland suggests, "The writings of Cyprian assume a concrete altar for the West."[107]

Again, in Epistle 59, Cyprian speaks about the real, physical danger schismatics present to the church. They use "threats" and try to "force an entry" into the church. He calls the priest to continue "guarding (*custodiens*)" the church, drawing upon the Old Testament priest Zechariah as an exemplar. Because of his "bravery and faith," says Cyprian, Zechariah "was murdered in the temple of God (*in templo Dei*)…"[108] Here, through the physical description both of the schismatics' "forced entry" and the example of Zechariah dying "in the Temple," Cyprian evokes for us an image of a specific, physical church building, bodily protected by the Christian priests from forced entry. Just as Zechariah the priest protected God's holy house, so too the Christian priest must stand guard over the sacred Christian building. Cyprian continues this evocation of the physical building by rejecting the idea that catholic bishops should depart, letting the schismatics have their way. He writes:

> All that would remain is for the church to surrender to the Capitol, with the priests retreating (*recedentibus sacerdotibus*) and removing the altar of the Lord (*ac Domini altare removentibus*), and at the same time the [pagan] images (*simulacra*) and idols (*idola*) with their altars (*aris*) would move in to take over the sacred and hallowed gathering place of our clergy (*cleri nostri sacrum venerandumque congestum*).[109]

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106 *Ep.* 45.2.2, *CCSL* 3B: 218.

107 "Einen konkreten Altar setzen auch für das Abendland die Schriften Cyprians voraus." Franz Wieland, *Mensa und Confessio. Studien über den altar der altchristlichen Liturgie. I. Der Altar der vorkonstantinischen Kirche* (München: J.J. Lentner'schen, 1906), 116.

108 *Ep.* 59.17.1, *CCSL* 3C: 367–68.

109 *Ep.* 59.18.1, *CCSL* 3C: 369.

This is a revealing passage because it speaks both of the physical worship space and physical objects in that worship space. If the catholic bishops retreat, says Cyprian, the "altar of the Lord" will be physically removed, pagan altars will physically take their place, and the "sacred and hallowed gathering place of the clergy" will be occupied by heathens. Here in one passage we see the confluence of ideas regarding priesthood, physical objects of worship, and sacred space and place. As Victor Saxer concludes from passages such as this, it is "entirely certain that our passage refers to a concrete situation… It seems to me scarcely possible to remove the reference to such an architectural reality from the argument of Saint Cyprian."[110] Like the Old Testament priests who were the attendants of the Lord and his sacred house, so too for Cyprian, bishops are the Christian priests who attend to the Christian sacred space and objects. Cyprian's weaving together of the images of Christian sacred space and the ministerial priesthood suggest that for him the two were connected. Part of the function of the bishop *qua* priest was to guard the physical worship space of the church.

This aspect of sacred space and sacred objects appears again in one of Cyprian's epistles regarding heretical baptism, where he makes an intriguing point about the rite of baptism, the use of oil, and (surprisingly) the connection to the Eucharistic altar. He explains that

> it is necessary for one who has been baptized to be anointed so that by receiving the chrism, that is the anointing, he may be the anointed of God and receive within him the grace of Christ. Moreover, it is at the Eucharist (*eucharistia*) that the oil with which the baptized are anointed is sanctified upon the altar (*altari santificatum*). But whoever does not have an altar (*altare*) or a church (*ecclesiam*) cannot sanctify the material substance of oil (*sanctificare autem non potuit olei creaturam*).[111]

Cyprian's point is that the heretics and schismatics, who do not celebrate the true Eucharist or have a true altar or church, can therefore never sanctify (*sanctificare*) the "material substance" of oil.[112] They have no sacred space and

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110 "Tout aussi sûr que notre passage se réfère à une situation concrète... Il ne me semble guère possible d'écarter du raisonnement de S. Cyprien la référence à une telle réalité architectural." Saxer, *Vie liturgique*, 59.

111 *Ep*. 70.2.2, *CCSL* 3C: 507.

112 See Wieland, *Mensa und Confessio*, 121. Also, there is extended debate about some textual issues here, but none of the textual alternatives alter the main argument as I see it. See G.W. Clarke, *The Epistles*, vol. 4, 201–202, n.10 for an extended discussion of the issues.

therefore no ability to "sanctify" the oil. As G.W. Clarke notes, "*eucharistia* would have signified to contemporary readers the bread and wine consecrated upon the altar. The oil was hallowed (*in altari sanctificatum*) on the same altar in company with the consecrated bread and wine."[113] Without exploring how Cyprian understood the mechanics of this consecration, one thing is abundantly clear: Cyprian conceives of the altar, the Eucharistic elements, and the oil as "sacred" objects in the Christian worship setting. The bishop, as the one who presides over the baptism, would have been responsible for this Christian *sacra*.

Not surprisingly, just a few lines later, Cyprian raises the notion of priesthood, saying "But can a sinful and sacrilegious priest (*sacerdos sacrilegus*) offer any prayer for the person he has baptized, since it is written: 'God does not hear the sinner…?'"[114] Once again the nexus of priesthood and attendance to the sacred things of the church stands out. From these texts, one can see that Cyprian understood the Christian priesthood in analogous terms to the Old Testament priesthood: they were the guardians and attendants of God's house, custodians of the sacred space and sacred objects belonging to the Lord. The emerging material Christian culture is very much a part of Cyprian's conception of a Christian ministerial priesthood.

Conclusion

As noted earlier, when Cyprian describes the Christian priest as one who "waits on the altar,"[115] "stands at the altar,"[116] or "serves the altar and divine sacrifices,"[117] he has in mind the physical attendance to a physical church and altar. His responsibility over this sacred space and sacred Christian objects, then, evokes the same attention and protection ascribed to Israelite priests as the "attendants of the Lord" who "stand and minister to the Lord" in his Temple. He sees the church as a worshipping community that occupies physical

113 Clarke, *The Epistles*, vol. 4, 202. Even if *eucharistia* is taken to refer more literally to "thanksgiving" offered over the oil on the altar which then makes it holy, the force of the argument is the same: the oil and the altar are portrayed as "sacred" objects in Christian worship.

114 *Ep.* 70.2.3, *CCSL* 3C: 509.

115 *Ep.* 72.2.2, *CCSL* 3C: 526.

116 *Ep.* 61.2.3, *CCSL* 3C: 381.

117 *Ep.* 67.1.2, *CCSL* 3C: 448

sacred space and involves sacred objects within that worship context. But more broadly, because Cyprian links the church with Israel theologically, the Christian bishop presides over the entire religio-political and sacred entity of the church, cast in the model of the Levitical priest who, like the bishop, attends to God's house and to his sacred objects. Returning briefly to Lightfoot's comments at the beginning of this chapter, this present examination of Cyprian has demonstrated that contra Lightfoot, Cyprian did not "boldly transfer himself into the new domain" with respect to a Christian ministerial leadership. Certainly, he bolstered the claims of episcopal authority and leadership on the grounds of Old Testament Levitical leadership, and strengthened the ties between the sacrificial Eucharist and a presiding priesthood. However, in most respects, Cyprian stands well within the tradition of the early church before him by regarding the Christian bishop as a "priest" in light of a robust religio-political ecclesiology and the emergence of a distinct Christian material culture over which the bishop-priest presided and for which he was responsible.

· 7 ·

PRIESTS OF GOD'S HOLY TEMPLE

Eusebius of Caesarea

In the last chapter, I explored the writings of Cyprian of Carthage for the continued development of priestly language being applied to Christian leadership. Within that context of the mid-third century, I demonstrated that for Cyprian (as for the other writers and texts examined so far) the designation of the bishop as "priest" stemmed from an appropriation of Israelite "priesthood" and often appeared within the context of an emerging consciousness of Christian sacred space and sacred objects.

All the texts I have considered so far have been pre-Constantinian. I would like now to offer a brief examination of one fourth-century, post-Constantinian thinker, Eusebius of Caesarea, to demonstrate the continued development and natural culmination of the notion that the Christian ministerial priesthood stands in connection with both a religio-political ecclesiology and the emergence of a Christian material culture. In doing so, I wish to demonstrate two things. First, like his predecessors, Eusebius bears witness to the nexus between an assumed continuity with Israel and the centrality of a Christian sacred material culture as the backdrop to his articulation of a Christian ministerial priesthood. Second, and related to the first, the articulation of a Christian ministerial priesthood during this early post-Constantinian period must be seen in continuity with the earlier expressions of the same by

the writers of the third century (chapters 2–6). Thus, there is no radical break here in the Christian conception of the Israelite priest finding fulfillment in the Christian priest who presides over Christian *sacra*. The Constantinian period, therefore, although significant in the development of Christian material culture and in gaining Christianity's favorable standing in the Empire, produced only further developments of earlier understandings of Christian leadership, not a betrayal of the previous century. In this sense, the bishop-as-priest paradigm in the post-Constantinian era is a natural culmination of the trajectory already witnessed in the third century.[1]

Priesthood and History: Dedication of the Church at Tyre

One of the most tangible effects of the conversion of Constantine and his subsequent "Christianization" of the Roman Empire was the building of Christian churches.[2] Yet, as demonstrated earlier, Christians had already begun to establish unique places of worship in various parts of the world (for example in Rome, Syria and North Africa). Eusebius also bears witness to this material growth of pre-Constantinian Christianity:

> And how could someone describe those myriad assemblies, the multitude of gatherings in each city, and the notable meetings in the places of prayer, on account of which, no one being any longer satisfied with the old buildings, they would raise up from the foundations churches (*ekklēsias*) of spacious dimensions throughout all the cities?[3]

The church building is such a dominant feature of Christianity even prior to the Diocletian persecution (AD c. 300) that Eusebius speaks of the persecution of Christians precisely in terms of the destruction of church buildings.[4] Because of the growing pride and hypocrisy within the church, says Eusebius,

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1 I will also argue in the next chapter, however, that this bishop-priest paradigm of the third and fourth centuries is compatible with and the natural outworking of the trajectories of earlier Christian thinking in the New Testament and sub-apostolic period as well.

2 See Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), 17–24; and L. Michael White, *Social Origins of Christian Architecture*, vol. 1, 127–139, for a brief overview of Constantine's contributions in this area.

3 *H.E.* 8.1.5, *SC* 55: 4.

4 See White, *Social Origins*, vol. 1, 127, who makes a similar point.

God sent persecution as discipline, whereby God "has profaned to the earth, through the destruction of the churches (*dia tēs tōn ekklēsiōn kathaireseōs*), his sanctuary (*to hagiasma autou*)…"[5]

After Constantine's rise to power, then, there is a renewed emphasis (and with it an imperial approval) on building new Christian structures while also restoring previously destroyed places of worship. This brings us to one of the most illuminating texts for my thesis: the sermon of Eusebius of Caesarea at the dedication of the church re-building at Tyre.[6] Within this lengthy oration Eusebius masterfully weaves together into one narrative the historical occasion of the consecration of the rebuilt church at Tyre and the biblical stories of God's sacred buildings in the Old Testament. Moreover, in doing so, Eusebius provides a particularly clear witness to the notion of the Christian minister as a "priest" within the context of both a religio-political ecclesiology which sees the church as a new Roman *polis* in continuity with Israel, and the reality of the church as a sacred space over which the Christian priest presides.

It should be clear that by the time of Eusebius the designation of the Christian leader as a "priest" was well-established.[7] Eusebius naturally refers to the bishop as priest (*hiereus*) throughout his speech and expects his audience to know what he means. "Our leaders conducted perfect worship, and the consecrated priests (*hierōmenōn*) performed religious services and the appropriate rites of the church," says Eusebius, which included "psalmody and the reading of words which were given to us from God" and "the ministering of the divine and mystical services."[8] A little later, Eusebius declares those ecclesiastical leaders "friends of God and priests (*hiereis*) who are clothed with the holy robe (*ton hagion podērē*)."[9]

What is most illuminating about Eusebius' speech is the way in which he moves from Old Testament narrative to contemporary events and back again. In weaving together these chronologically disparate events, he is

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5 *H.E.* 8.1.9, *SC* 55: 6.

6 Dated between AD 313 and 324, Paul Corby Finney dates it at AD 313 (*The Invisible God: The Earliest Christian on Art* [New York: Oxford U.P., 1994], 290); Hans Georg Thümmel dates it at AD 317. ("Versammlungraum, Kirche, Tempel," in *Gemeinde ohne Tempel*, ed. Beate Ego, et al [Tübingen: Mohr, 1999], 499; White dates the final redaction to AD 324. (*Social Origins*, vol 2, 94–99).

7 See chapters 2–6.

8 *H.E.* 10.3.3, *SC* 55: 80.

9 *H.E.* 10.4.2, *SC* 55: 81. Note also the evocation of the Levitical priestly garment in Exodus 29:5 LXX: *ton chitōna ton podērē.*

demonstrating an underlying acceptance of an historically unified divine plan. As Wallace-Hadrill explains, Eusebius "saw the whole history from Genesis to his own times in a single sweep of vision"[10] such that "everything that Eusebius wrote was historical, and everything was biblical."[11] The biblical text becomes an illustration of the contemporary event just as the contemporary event acts as the fulfillment of biblical realities. This is no less true when it comes to Eusebius' panegyric on the church building at Tyre where he oscillates rhetorically between the church at Tyre and the Old Testament places of worship: the Tabernacle under Moses, the Temple under Solomon, and the re-built Temple under Zerubbabel. In doing so, Eusebius repeatedly refers to the Christian church building as a "temple" (*neōs, naos*).[12]

In his introduction, Eusebius declares Paulinus, the bishop of Tyre, the "youthful pride of God's holy temple (*hagiou neō*)," and one given the "special honor of building his house upon earth (*ton epi gēs oikon*)."[13] He then introduces three illustrations he will use as metaphors for the Christian church building at Tyre: the Tabernacle, the Second Temple, and the Solomonic Temple.[14] After a lengthy explication of God's power and providence through history, Eusebius moves to his illustration of the Tyrian church paralleling the Old Testament Tabernacle. Like Bezalel,[15] who was called and gifted "as the craftsman for the construction of the Temple through symbols of heavenly types," so too, says Eusebius, "this man [Paulinus], bearing in his own soul the image of the whole Christ, the Word, the Wisdom, and the Light, has formed this magnificent temple of God most high (*theou tou hupsistou neōn*)."[16] Furthermore, just as the Israelites brought precious jewelry, metal, wood, stone, cloth, oil and incense for the construction and decoration of the old covenant Tabernacle,[17] so too Eusebius commends the Christian people of Tyre: "it is impossible to describe with what greatness of soul, with what

10 D.S. Wallace-Hadrill, *Eusebius of Caesarea* (London: Mowbray, 1960), 93.

11 Wallace-Hadrill, *Eusebius*, 168.

12 I will return to this important point below.

13 *H.E.* 10.4.2., *SC* 55: 81–82.

14 Eusebius places his illustrations in this non-chronological order, perhaps to end on a high note in the grandeur and splendor of the Solomonic Temple.

15 See Exodus 31:1–5 and 35:30–33.

16 *H.E.* 10.4.25–26, *SC* 55: 89. Paulinus was the current bishop in Tyre and thus Eusebius' object of praise at the consecration of the church building in Tyre.

17 See Exodus 35:20–29.

richness"[18] they strove to display their generosity in giving materials for the construction of the church. The church building is likened to God's dwelling place under Moses, Paulinus compared to the craftsman Bezalel, and the Christian people likened to the Israelites. For Eusebius, the church in Tyre evokes the biblical record of the building of the Tabernacle while the Old Testament event becomes a living word-picture for the Christian church now being dedicated in Tyre.

Eusebius then reviews the recent violent persecution suffered by the Christians, reminding them how the pagans destroyed their churches, burned the Christian texts, "set on fire the sanctuary of God (*to hagiastērion tou theou*), and profaned to the ground the tent of his name (*to skēnōma tou onomatos*)."[19] The point which Eusebius wishes to make, of course, is that those same churches, once destroyed, are now being rebuilt. He draws upon the poetic imagery of Isaiah 35:3 to describe this renewal: "the hands which before hung down have become strong… the knees which before were weak and diseased have recovered their natural movement."[20]

This moves Eusebius to a second, brief biblical allusion, and with it yet another connection between Old Testament and contemporary Christian events. The current circumstances in Tyre remind him of the rebuilding of the Temple under Zerubbabel.[21] Working with Isaiah 35:1 ("The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice…"), Eusebius proclaims: "The word which announced beforehand that she who had been made a desert by God should enjoy these blessings, this man [Paulinus], our new and excellent Zerubbabel, heard with the sharp hearing of his mind after that bitter captivity and the abomination of desolation."[22] Through the activity of Paulinus, "our new Zerubbabel," says Eusebius, the Christians are aroused to the task of rebuilding the church such that the prophecy of Haggai 2:9 might be fulfilled, "And the latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former."[23]

Again, Eusebius effortlessly moves between two worlds. The contemporary events evoke in his mind the events of Scripture, while the biblical realities becomes pointers to their ultimate fulfillment in the Christian era, and in

18 *H.E.* 10.4.26, SC 55: 89.
19 *H.E.* 10.4.33, SC 55: 91.
20 *H.E.* 10.4.34, SC 55: 92.
21 See Ezra 3:8–11.
22 *H.E.* 10.4.36, SC 55: 92.
23 *H.E.* 10.4.36, SC 55: 93, citing Haggai 2:9.

particular, the church building at Tyre. The church of Tyre, rebuilt after the destruction by Diocletian, is likened to the second Temple, rebuilt after its destruction by Babylon; the Christian leader Paulinus is likened to the Israelite leader Zerubbabel; and the Christian people are compared with the Israelite workers who help in the task of rebuilding.

This prompts Eusebius to embark on a lengthy description of the architecture of the new church building, including its outer and inner walls, "sacred areas" (*hieroi*), "thrones" (*thronoi*) and "altar" (*thysiastērion*).[24] Throughout this section, Eusebius employs the term "temple" (*neōs*) to describe the church structure, demonstrating again his intention to connect the Christian building with the Israelite place of worship.[25]

This extensive description of the architecture of the church building, however, moves Eusebius toward a third biblical allusion: the glorious first Temple under Solomon. All of his talk about the Tyrian church as a "completed temple (*ton neōn epitelesas*)" with "thrones (*thronois*)" and an "altar in the midst of the holy of holies" (*to tōn hagiōn hagion thysiastērion en mesōi*) impels Eusebius to speak of bishop Paulinus as "our most peaceful Solomon" who constructed the "temple of God (*ton neōn tou theou*) for those who still have need of cleansing and sprinkling with water and the Holy Spirit."[26] Doubtless, Eusebius intends to compare the "cleansing and sprinkling" of the old covenant priesthood with that of the new (in baptism), both centered around the designated places of worship (the Temple and the church).[27]

An Ecclesiological Continuity with Israel

Behind each of these comparisons lies an assumed continuity between Israel and the Christian church such that what was said or recorded about Israel

24 *H.E.* 10.4.37–44, *SC* 55: 93–96.

25 Although one might speculate whether Eusebius intends to evoke the pagan temple by his use of the term *neōs*, his repeated references to the Old Testament narrative and the Old Testament place of worship strongly suggest that Eusebius has this biblical temple in mind.

26 *H.E.* 10.4.44–45, *SC* 55: 95–96.

27 Consider Exodus 24:8 or 29:21 where blood and oil are sprinkled on the people and the priests. Also, Lev. 14:7 and 16:19 speak of an unclean person being "sprinkled" and "cleansed" by blood and water. Eusebius is likely taking his cue from Hebrews 10:22 ("with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water") which also draws upon Old Testament priestly types as analogous to Christian realities.

in the Scriptures is now illustrated in fuller capacity with Christ's church. God's divine plan for Israel has been fulfilled according to Eusebius with the rise of the Christian church. Paulinus is a "new Bezalel," a "new Zerubbabel," "our Solomon." The Old Testament places of worship become models for Christian realities like the Christian churches. Thus, the underlying, but nevertheless firm assumption, throughout his discourse is this ecclesiological correspondence with Israel. This implicit connection runs like a careful thread throughout the panegyric. For example, in introducing his subject about the rebuilding of churches after the Diocletian persecution, Eusebius draws upon the prophecy of the dry bones in Ezekiel 37 and proclaims: "Indeed, conforming to the prophetic prediction which mystically signified in advance what was to occur, there came together bone to bone and joint to joint and whatever was truly announced in enigmatic words."[28] How was this prophecy to Israel fulfilled? Eusebius answers: through the gathering together of Christians in worship, wherein "the consecrated priests performed the religious services and the appropriate rites of the church…"[29] Ezekiel's prophecy of renewal "to the whole house of Israel" (Ezek 37:11) finds its fulfillment in the Christian church and its (priestly) ministerial leadership.

Again, toward the end of his oration, Eusebius quotes a lengthy section of Isaiah's prophecies to Israel (selections of Is. 49–54). Speaking of the persecution of the Christian church, Eusebius reminds them of the words of Isaiah: though they have "drunk the cup of fury at the hand of the Lord … Behold, I have taken from your hand the cup of stumbling, the bowl of my fury… Awake, awake, put on strength, put on your glory."[30] The implication is that Isaiah's words to Israel are meant for the Christian community, which Eusebius himself declares explicitly when he concludes: "These things Isaiah prophesied, these things concerning us (*peri hēmōn*) had been set down long ago in sacred books; but it was necessary for us at some time to understand the truthfulness of these things by deeds (*ergois*)."[31] The "deeds" of which Eusebius speaks are the current circumstances: churches being rebuilt and their glory being restored. For Eusebius, then, the Christian church, particularly its glorious materiality, has become the fulfillment of the prophetic promises to Israel in Isaiah and Ezekiel.

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28 *H.E.* 10.3.2, *SC* 55: 80.
29 *H.E.* 10.3.3, *SC* 55: 80.
30 *H.E.* 10.4.50, *SC* 55: 97–98.
31 *H.E.* 10.4.53, *SC* 55: 98.

In book 8 of his *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius portrays the same connection between Israel and the church. Speaking again of the Diocletian persecution, he remarks: "The Lord drowned all the beautiful things of *Israel* and has broken down all his hedges. According to what has been foretold in the Psalms, he has overturned the covenant of his servant and has profaned to the ground, through the destruction of the churches, his sanctuary (*hagiasma autou*)…"[32] The persecution of Christians is depicted in terms of the Lord's chastisement. The destruction of churches is equated with the destruction of God's "sanctuary" (*hagiasma*).

Eusebius' intentional connection between the church and Israel results in his assertion that the promises of God to Abraham have been fulfilled in the church,[33] the promises and commands to Israel are appropriated for the church, and priestly models of Old Testament leadership become typological models for Christian bishops. Thus, Eusebius' conception of the church in continuity with Israel lies as the tacit reference when, in this same oration, he calls the church an *ethnos* (nation) which "extends everywhere the sun shines."[34] Given his explicit connection between Israel and the church earlier, one sees more clearly that his designation of the Christian body here as an *ethnos* evokes the biblical "nation" of Israel itself. Yet, in speaking of such an *ethnos*, Eusebius clearly does not intend another ethnic, racial community at odds with ethnic Judaism; rather, he envisions a worshipping community, ethnically diverse, which corresponds with biblical Israel's God, Scriptures, theological vocabulary, rituals, worship space, and models of leadership. Thus, his ecclesiology is not just theological in scope, but concrete and political as well (a religio-political ecclesiology). The church is, for Eusebius, its own divine nation, the fulfillment of biblical Israel.[35] Though a community in distinction from contemporary Jews, Christians exist, Eusebius claims, in a faithful

32 *H.E.* 8.1.8–9, SC 55: 6; italics added for emphasis.

33 See *H.E.* 1.4.13, SC 31: 20.

34 *H.E.* 10.4.19, *SC* 55: 87.

35 Consider also the fact that Eusebius is writing a "church history." Unlike Livy or Tacitus who wrote histories of nations and people groups, Eusebius is writing a history of a religion in itself. This indicates that Eusebius saw the Christian church as something akin to the 'Roman nation,' a culture or *polis* of its own. Consider also, for example, that just as Tacitus structures his *Annals* around the reigns of the Emperors Tiberius, Claudius and Nero, so too Eusebius structures his *History* around the reigns of Emperors and notable bishops (see Wallace-Hadrill, *Eusebius*, 158–159, who alludes to this).

continuity with the biblical plan of God as first begun in Abraham.[36] As Eusebius himself says elsewhere, "the law and life decreed by our Savior Jesus Christ recapitulates that most ancient piety older than Moses."[37] According to Eusebius, the church does not abrogate God's work with Abraham and Israel; instead, the promise to Abraham finds completion and transformation in Christ and the church, and in this very way God remains faithful to his covenant with Israel.[38]

Within Eusebius' work, then, this assumed continuity between biblical Israel and the contemporary Christian church finds application not just in historical events such as temple constructions old and new, but also more specifically between priestly leadership and aspects of architectural sacred space, such as the altar and the holy of holies. As already seen, Eusebius speaks at length about the architectural structure of the church building in Tyre, but also provides a glimpse of the interior itself. There, says Eusebius, one finds not only "benches," "seats," and "thrones," but an "altar placed in the midst of the holy of holies" (*to tōn hagiōn hagion thysiastērion en mesōi theis*).[39] A little later, he inquires: "But as to the revered, great and unique altar (*thysiastērion*), what might it be except the pure holy of holies (*hagiōn hagion*) of the common priest of all?"[40] This moves us, then, to consider a second aspect of Eusebius'

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36 See also *Dem. Ev.* 1.6 for the same argument in Eusebius.

37 *Dem. Ev.*1.5, *PG* 22: 44D.

38 Consider also Eusebius' own comments that his writings are not intended to be polemics against the Jews (*Dem. Ev.* 1.1, *PG* 22: 20B). Jorg Ulrich, in his recent work, *Euseb von Caesarea und die Juden* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999) adds some helpful nuance to this issue. He addresses the question of whether Eusebius saw the relationship between church and synagogue as a "Substitutionsmodell"; his answer is yes and no. On the one hand, the church does, in a sense, become the replacement for the synagogue (citing similar texts I use above). On the other hand, Ulrich carefully notes that elsewhere Eusebius clearly sees Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament models of prophet, priest, and king such these Old Testament models "are not at all abolished in the church, but in Christ" (214). By examining both sets of Eusebian texts (those depicting the church as the intended subject of prophetic promises and also those depicting Christ himself as the true fulfillment) Ulrich further concludes: "By this, Eusebius ventures out quite beyond the usual model of a substitution of the synagogue by the church... Thus Christ, as a representative of God's will of universal salvation, stands not for the discharge of the synagogue out of the divine plan of salvation, but for the universalization of this plan of salvation, a principle which also contains the Jews" (215).

39 *H.E.* 10.4.44, *SC* 55: 96.

40 *H.E.* 10.4.68, *SC* 55: 102.

portrayal of the Christian church during his time: the reality of a Christian material culture, paralleling the institutional culture of Israelite worship.

Christian Material Culture and Sacred Space

Although writers before him tended to avoid the explicit designation, Eusebius repeatedly describes the church building as both "temple" (*neōs*)[41] and "sacred places" (*hieroi*)[42] into which one enters. One can rightly conclude with Hans Georg Thümmel that "a radical innovation appears. The church is not only compared with the Old Testament Temple, but also named as such."[43] As I demonstrated earlier, this language of "temple" and "sacred place" employed by Eusebius intends to evoke the Israelite Temple of the Old Testament, and with it, the firm notion of the church building as sacred space and place, a "sanctuary" (*hagiasma*). As also seen previously, Eusebius describes the Diocletian persecution in similar terms: the pagans destroyed Christian books and "set on fire the sanctuary of God (*to hagiastērion tou theou*); they profaned to the ground the Tent (*skēnōma*) of his name (citing Psalm 74:7)."[44] The destroyed churches are not merely neutral architectural structures; rather, they are invested with sanctity as the place of God much like the Old Testament Temple, the use of Psalm 74:7 making clear this intended connection.

Moreover, Eusebius describes the furniture of the church itself in sacred terms. With the temple (*neōs*) complete (i.e. the Tyrian church), and furnished with thrones and benches, Eusebius adds: he then "placed the altar in the midst of the holy of holies (*to tōn hagiōn hagion thysiastērion en mesōi theis*), and so that it might be inaccessible to the multitude, enclosed it with a fence of wooden lattice-work."[45] The liturgical furniture known as the altar

41 See for example *H.E.* 10.2.1, SC 55: 79 (*neōs*); 10.4.1, SC 55:81 (*neōs*); 10.4.2–3, SC 55: 81–83 (*hagiou neō*); 10.4.20, SC 55: 87 (*theiōn naōn*); 10.4.26, SC 55: 89 (*theou tou hypsistou neōn*); 10.4.39–41, SC 55: 94 (*neō* and *ton neōn*); 10.4.44, SC 55: 95 (*ton neōn*); and 10.4.69, SC 55: 103 (*ho megas neōs*). See Ludwig Völkl for a broader examination of Eusebius' terms for church buildings ("Die konstantinischen Kirchenbauten nach Eusebius," *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 29 [1953]: 49–66).

42 *H.E.* 10.4.38–40, SC 55: 93–94.

43 Thümmel, "Versammlungraum," 499.

44 *H.E.* 10.4.33, SC 55: 91–92. See also 10.4.58 for the exact same description of the destruction of the "sanctuary of God" and the "dwelling place of his name."

45 *H.E.* 10.4.44, SC 55: 96.

(*thysiastērion*) and the space in which it is placed (the *hagiōn hagion*) is of such sanctity that it must be cordoned off from the congregation. Here Eusebius' description of the Tyrian church is a clear evocation of the very structure and divisions of the Old Testament Temple layout.[46]

In another passage, Eusebius recounts the tale of Marinus, a soldier whose promotion to high rank was prevented because "he was a Christian and did not sacrifice to the emperors." Confessing Christ before the judge, Marinus was given three hours to reconsider his position. During that time, the local bishop "pulled him aside in conversation, took him by the hand, and led him to the church. Once inside," Eusebius recounts, "he stood him close to the sanctuary (*tōi hagiasmati*) itself, and raising Marinus' cloak a little, pointed to the sword which was hanging on him; at the same time he brought and placed before him the book of the divine Gospels, and commanded him to choose which of the two he wished."[47] The significance of this passage lies in the phrase *tōi hagiasmati*. As Michael White concludes, "The text clearly presupposes a formal layout to the church building, since the 'sanctuary' or 'holy place' is an articulated space *within* the edifice."[48] While scholars debate whether this term refers to an inner area within the church or to the physical altar itself,[49] Eusebius clearly demonstrates the notion of a sacred, holy space or object of which the bishop has charge.[50]

Likewise, near the end of his Tyrian panegyric, Eusebius declares that the "unique altar" (*monogenes thysiatērion*) is the "pure holy of holies (*hagiōn hagion*) of the common priest (*hiereōs*) of all."[51] In other words, Eusebius' use of the sacred terms "temple," "altar," and especially "holy of holies" demonstrates that he does not intend his hearers to think in terms of pagan temples,

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46 See Exodus 26–27.

47 *H.E.* 7.15.2,4, SC 41 : 189–190.

48 White, *Social Origins*, vol. 2, 91 n.34 ; italics his.

49 White seems to lean toward an area within the church; Franz Dölger, connecting this passage with the later phrase (10.4.44) *to tōn hagiōn hagion*, argues for the altar itself as the referent of *tōi hagiasmati* ("Die Heiligkeit des Altars und ihre Begruendung im christlichen Altertum," *Antike und Christentum* 2 (1930): 161–183.

50 For a further examination of the idea of the sanctity of the altar in the ancient church, see Joseph Braun, *Der christliche Altar in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, vol. 1 (Munchen: Alte Meister Guenther Koch, 1924), 666–674; and O. Nussbaum, "Zelebration versus populum und der Opfercharakter der Messe," *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 93 (1971): 156.

51 *H.E.* 10.4.68, *SC* 55: 102.

but specifically of the Israelite Temple and worship. Even architecturally speaking, as Krautheimer notes,

> for both practical and ideological reasons it was impossible that this new Christian architecture [the basilica] should evolve from the religious architecture of pagan antiquity… [Christians] shied away from pagan temples to such a degree that neither they nor even their sites were occupied by the Church before the late fourth century in the East or before the sixth century in the West.[52]

The sanctity of space within the Christian church is set in parallel to and comparison with the Israelite Temple of old, not the pagan temples.[53]

This last text of Eusebius is worth exploring in more detail, for in it we find not just a connection between Old Testament Temple and the Christian church, but also a cosmic and mystical connection to the heavenly worship itself. In addition to being tied analogically to Old Testament worship and sacred space, the church's connection to a cosmic, heavenly worship is part of what gives the earthly church its "holiness" or "sanctity." Eusebius had described the altar as "the pure holy of holies of the common priest of all."[54] He continues by explaining what he means:

> Standing beside it on the right hand, the great High Priest of the universe, Jesus himself, the Only-begotten of God, receives with a joyful face and extended hands, the sweet smelling incense from all, and the bloodless and immaterial sacrifices offered in prayer, and sends them on their way to the heavenly Father and God of the universe.[55]

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52 Krautheimer, *ECBA*, 19. For another good discussion of why the Christian basilica was chosen over, say, the pagan temple architecture, see J.B. Ward-Perkins, "Constantine and the Christian Basilica," in *Art, Archaeology and Architecture of Early Christianity*, ed. Paul Corby Finney (New York: Garland Pub., 1993), 363–384. Ward-Perkins notes, especially, that "the traditional pagan temple was architecturally quite unsuited to the needs of Christian worship... for its Eucharistic celebrations, and for those other liturgical occasions that involved the presence of the Christian community in large numbers…" (372).

53 Krautheimer notes that in some instances, basilicas carried a certain religious overtone, connected with the Imperial cult and that "the palace basilica in which [the Emperor] sat enthroned was ipso facto a religious building" (*ECBA*, 21). Although this may be the case in certain instances, it is clear from Eusebius that what makes the Christian church in Tyre a sacred religious space is not any evocation of the imperial, pagan cult, but its relationship with both the Old Testament models of worship and the heavenly worship.

54 *H.E.* 10.4.68, *SC* 55: 102.

55 *H.E.* 10.4.68, *SC* 55: 102–103.

In other words, the altar, says Eusebius, though material and physical, also has a mystical connection with Christ himself as high priest and the spiritual offerings of prayer made in the church. As Frederich Deichmann suggests, "The church building of Tyre was, as Eusebius explains in his consecration sermon, an image of the heavenly Jerusalem. This earthly sanctuary corresponds also to the heavenly, and is therefore called a Temple."[56]

This cosmic connection is asserted yet again in the very next moment when Eusebius continues: "Such is the great temple which the Word, the great Creator of the universe, has built throughout the whole world under the sun, forming again this spiritual image (*eikona*) upon earth of those vaults beyond the heavens."[57] The idea is that the physical, material church, observable with the visible eye, is a representation, an indicator, of the heavenly worship taking place in invisible realms. Thus, while the Old Testament Temple acts as an important "type" for the contemporary Christian church building, Eusebius also indicates that the church's sanctity and functions derive from and participate in the higher, heavenly realities with which it is connected. Just as the Old Testament Temple expressed "symbols of heavenly types (*typōn*),"[58] so too the Christian church displays those realities for Eusebius.

Conclusion

This brings us back to the idea of a Christian priesthood, which must be understood in light of Eusebius' dynamic connection between Israel and the church, as well as his understanding of the church building as a sacred space evoking the Old Testament Temple and participation in heavenly worship. For example, returning to the beginning of his oration, Eusebius proclaims that "our leaders conducted perfect worship, and the consecrated priests (*hierōmenōn*) performed the religious services and appropriate rites of the church." What do those rites include? Singing and the reading of Scripture ("psalmody and

56 "Der Kirchenbau von Tyrus war, wie Eusebios in seiner Weihepredigt ausführte, ein Abbild des himmlischen Jerusalem. Dieses irdische Heiligtum entsprach also dem himmlischen und wird daher Tempel genannt." Frederich Wilhelm Deichmann, "Von Tempel zur Kirche" in *Mullus: Festschrift Theodor Klauser*, eds. Alfred Stuiber and Alfred Hermann, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum 1 (Muenster: Aschendorff, 1964), 58.

57 *H.E.* 10.4.69, *SC* 55: 103.

58 *H.E.* 10.4.25, *SC* 55: 89; compare also Hebrews 8:5 for similar ideas in the New Testament.

the reading of words which were given to us from God"), other liturgical services such as prayers and offerings ("the ministering of divine and mystical services"), and the celebration of the Eucharist ("the ineffable symbols of the Savior's passion").[59] In other words, the bishops of the church are "priests" precisely in their entire role of liturgical responsibility and oversight, much in the same way that the priests of Israel were over the Temple and Old Testament worship.

Further, just moments after his description of the "rites and ordinances of the church," Eusebius declares Paulinus "friend and priest (*hiereus*) of God" but also identifies him as the "youthful pride of God's holy temple (*hagiou neō*)" who has the "special honor of building God's house upon earth."[60] Just as the Israelite priests cared for the house of the Lord, the Temple, so too, affirms Eusebius, the bishop-priest cares for the Christian building, "God's holy Temple (*hagiou neō*)."[61] Thus, the Israelite priesthood (not a pagan priesthood) becomes a model for the Christian bishop, and the Israelite Temple of old becomes a working "type" for the Christian church building, its sacred space, and its furnishings.

In light of this observation, however, one striking puzzle remains. It is clear that Eusebius ties Christian legitimacy to Abraham, not the Mosaic legislation, as proto-Christian. As he says in the beginning of his *Ecclesiastical History*, "the religion which was proclaimed to all the gentiles… is the foremost and most ancient of all religions, and the one discovered by those god-loving men in the age of Abraham."[62] Further, those who loved God in the time of Abraham "had no care for bodily circumcision any more than we, nor for the keeping of Sabbaths any more than we, nor for avoiding certain foods, nor for regarding the other distinctions which Moses first delivered to be observed (such as Moses later began to hand down)."[63] If, as Eusebius claims, the promises to Abraham ought "to be understood as fulfilled in us,"[64] then why does he want to connect Christian

59 All found in *H.E.* 10.3, *SC* 55: 80.

60 *H.E.* 10.4.2, *SC* 55: 81–82.

61 It must be admitted that Eusebius may also have in mind the notion of the "temple" as the body of believers (cf. 1 Cor.3, 6); yet given the context of this oration (namely, the dedication of the church building), it seems quite likely that Eusebius here also intends to include the notion of "temple" as the church building itself.

62 *H.E* 1.4.10, *SC* 31: 19–20.

63 *H.E.* 1.4.8, *SC*, vol. 1, 19.

64 *H.E.* 1.4.13, *SC* 31: 20. Eusebius had just cited Gen. 12:3 and 18:18.

worship and leadership explicitly to Mosaic models, namely Tabernacle and Temple worship?

Eusebius himself seems to provide an answer in his earlier discussion of Moses wherein he declares that the Tabernacle plan and the ceremonies Moses received from God and delivered to the people were a "symbolic worship" (*symbolikē latreia*) pointing to "the true and pure religion" found in Christ. In other words, Israelite worship prefigured the heavenly worship of Christ in his fullness.[65] So, just as the Old Testament Temple and worship symbolized heavenly realities, so too, Christian worship participates in the cosmic, heavenly worship whose true high priest is none other than Christ himself. Thus, Christian priestly duties (presiding over the rites of psalmody, word and sacrament) are a participation in the heavenly worship, not in contradistinction from Old Testament worship, but precisely in continuity with and fulfillment of it.

Eusebius indicates this reasoning, for example, in our present oration. Just as Christ, the high priest, presides over the Temple of the body of believers, so too, says Eusebius, it may be possible for the Christian bishop "to take the second place after Him." Christ "the first and great high priest himself, has honored him [the bishop] with the second place in the priestly work… as if Christ himself had appointed him as his attendant and interpreter, the new Aaron or Melchizedek."[66] The Christian priesthood is connected with both the Old Testament form (in Aaron) and the new model found in Christ (Melchizedek), and in this way is both a mirror of Old Testament Israelite worship and a fuller participation in and expression of the heavenly, cosmic worship to which Old Testament worship pointed. Thus for Eusebius, the church participates in continuity with Israel yet also obtains something new. As Eusebius says, "Christ gave no longer types (*typoi*) or images (*eikones*) but the bare virtues themselves and the heavenly life."[67] The church (and in turn its leadership and worship) has both continuity with, yet transformation, of Israel, its leaders, and worship.

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65 See Exod 25:40 and Heb 8:5 for the biblical idea that the Old Testament Tabernacle was a copy and shadow of heavenly realities. See also *Dem. Ev.* 4.15–16 for similar understanding in Eusebius that God established through Moses "a more material worship on earth as an image of the spiritual and immaterial worship" (*PG* 22: 300C).

66 *H.E.* 10.4.23, *SC* 55: 88

67 *H.E.* 1.3.12, *SC* 31: 16.

Elsewhere within this same panegyric, Eusebius argues that Christ is a high priest who sees and does what the Father does, and works out these images based on the patterns and archetypes he sees. Just as Bezalel was chosen by God and filled with his Spirit "as the craftsman for the construction of the temple through symbols of heavenly types," so too bishop Paulinus, also filled with godly wisdom, "has formed this magnificent temple of God most high."[68] The implication is that the magnificent temple of God which Paulinus has just built (that is, the church in Tyre) is also connected to his priestly office. He imitates both the work of Christ, the high priest, and the Old Testament Temple worship, which likewise displayed "symbols of heavenly types."[69] Thus, there are two important aspects lying behind Eusebius' portrayal of the Christian bishop as a priest. First, his church-Israel continuity and fulfillment in Christ allows Eusebius to draw upon the ancient Levitical priesthood as a working model for Christian ministry. Second, Eusebius' clear notion of Christian sacred space, echoing Old Testament temple models, combines with his religio-political ecclesiology to further support his bishop-as-priest portrayal.

However, in addition to Eusebius' religio-political ecclesiology and his awareness of Christian sacred space as backdrop to his bishop-as-priest depiction, there is another important point to be made. It should be clear by now that the expressions we find in Eusebius, both in his description of the Christian bishop as priest and his description of the church building as a "temple," are only further developments of earlier trajectories, not a break from what has come before. Not all scholars have recognized this. Deichmann, for instance, suggests that Eusebius' expression of "the church as the sanctuary of God introduces a *new epoch* of the sacred-building in general."[70] Likewise, Georg Thümmel finds Eusebius to be a significant "turning point" (Wendepunkt)[71] in the Christian description of the building and minister. In fact, he argues that this is the first demonstrable time "the church is named a 'temple', the meal table an 'altar' and the minister

68 *H.E.* 10.4.25–26, *SC* 55: 89.

69 *H.E.* 10.4.25, *SC* 55: 89.

70 „Die Kirche als Gottes Heiligtum leitete eine *neue Epoche* des Sakralbau überhaupt ein." Deichmann, "Tempel," 58; italics added for emphasis.

71 Thümmel, "Versammlungraum," 500.

'priest'."[72] Statements such as Deichmann's and Thümmel's clearly ignore the evidence.

More accurately, one should see Eusebius standing in a clear line of tradition regarding his articulation of the Christian minister as a "priest," within the context of a religio-political ecclesiology and the notion of an emerging Christian material culture and sacred space over which the Christian priest presides.[73] By now the preceding chapters should demonstrate clearly that the pre-Eusebian, third-century church readily designated the meal table an "altar," the minister a "priest," and the worship space as "holy" or "sacred." The only new development Eusebius brings is the somewhat inevitable description of the church building as a "temple." Even this, however, comes as no surprise given the century-long tradition preceding him. Recall for example that even by the early third century, Tertullian was likening the physical *ecclesia* to the *templum dei*[74] while the *Didascalia Apostolorum* described the Tabernacle of Witness as "a type (*typos*) of the church."[75] Elsewhere, the Syriac *Edessen Chroncile* records that in the year AD 201 there was a massive flood which destroyed buildings, palaces, homes and "the temple (*haikla*) of the church of the Christians."[76] By the end of the fourth century, the church order *Apostolic Constitutions* would develop an extended analogy between the spatial design and layout of the church building (*ekklēsia tou theou*) and the Tabernacle and

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72 „Die Kirche 'Tempel', der Mahltisch 'Altar' und die Gestlichen 'Priester' gennant werden." Thümmel, "Versammlungraum," 501.

73 Even this Constantinian period of architectural development is not something born *ex nihilo*; rather, as J.B. Ward-Perkins, Michael White and Richard Krautheimer have shown, the basilical church form was the closest approximation on a larger scale to the already existing Christian structures of worship (i.e. assembly halls). As White notes, "The Constantinian innovation of basilical architecture, therefore, seems less abrupt. Although it surely represents a radically new imposition of scale and style on the architecture and aesthetic, it still depends on some continuity with earlier church buildings. The basilica may be seen as a further adaptation, monumentalization, and ultimately a standardization of diverse pre-Constantinian patterns of development" (*Social Origins*, vol. 1, 139). Just as the post-Constantinian developments in architecture lie in continuity with what has come before, so too Eusebius' expressions of the Christian ministerial priesthood find their roots in the third-century tradition. See Ward-Perkins, "Constantine," 363–384; Krautheimer, *ECBA*, 18.

74 *De Pud.* 20.1, *CCSL* 2: 1323. See also my discussion of this text in my earlier chapter on Tertullian.

75 *DA* 8. Greek text is found in *AC* 2.25, *SC* 320: 228–230.

76 Syriac text and English translation provided by White, *Social Origins*, vol. 2, 102.

Temple of God (*skene tou martyriou kai naos tou theou*)[77] calling the Temple a "type" (*typos*) of the Christian church. The notion of a Christian material sacred space, combined with the full religio-political ecclesiology expressed between Israel and the church, provides an ideal context for the eventual appropriation of the name "Temple"—the Old Testament worship space—for the Christian place of worship. The real question remains, then, whether this entire development of a Christian ministerial priesthood in the third and fourth century is, as many have suggested, at odds with the earlier expressions and understandings of the church and its leadership found in the New Testament and sub-apostolic periods. It is to this matter that I will devote my final chapter.

77 *AC* 2.57, *SC* 320 : 310–314.

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BRIDGING THE GAP

Early Trajectories of Priestly Ideas

Having traced the development of a third and early-fourth century Christian ministerial priesthood in connection with an underlying religio-political ecclesiology (the notions of the church as a "nation" or *polis* in its own right, yet in continuity with Israel) and the emergence of a Christian material culture, questions remain: is this development of priestly nomenclature a radical break from the church's understanding in the first two centuries? Is the rise of a Christian ministerial priesthood at odds with the very theology and social structure of earlier Christianity, or are there indications that such a development was a legitimate advancement of earlier Christian ecclesiology and social reality? Turning to these questions next, I will argue that a religio-political ecclesiology, seen lying behind the third-century development of a ministerial priesthood, was equally present in the first two centuries of Christian existence—leaving the door open for the possibility of a legitimate development of a Christian ministerial priesthood under the right circumstances.

Priestly Ideas in the Early Church?

As stated in my introduction, it is an oft-repeated refrain that the New Testament never designates any Christian leader as a "priest" (*hiereus*).[1] From this observation, however, many have concluded that *any* development of a Christian ministerial "priesthood" is evidence of a radical break from earliest Christian understanding.[2] Is this a proper conclusion? Terminology can be a tricky thing. Simply because a word does not appear in a text does not mean that the text outright opposes the use of such a word, or that the text opposes any conceptual notion of the same. In the present case, for the first statement to be true (that the New Testament opposes Christian ministers being called *hiereus*), we would have to find texts that say explicitly, "There is no warrant for a Christian minister to be called a priest." While there are, of course, no such direct statements, some might wish to make a more theological argument against a Christian ministerial priesthood. The primary one insists that since the book of Hebrews declares Christ as the high-priest who has fulfilled and abrogated the Levitical priesthood, there can be no warrant for human priests built on the model of the (now abrogated) Levitical priesthood. Indeed, Garry Wills argues a similar position in his newest work, *Why Priests?: A Failed Tradition*. Using the book of Hebrews to make his case, Wills argues that "it nowhere says that the priesthood would be a continuing institution for Christian men (and women). In fact, it says the opposite. Jesus is the last priest, whose onetime offering makes all other priesthoods obsolete."[3] This objection can be answered on two fronts. From an historical and textual front, the book of Hebrews and the high-priesthood of Christ rarely factored

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1 See chapter 1, n.1 for a full bibliography.

2 For example, see J. B. Lightfoot, *The Christian Ministry* (NY: Whittaker, 1878), 110–111, 141–143; P. M. Gy, "Notes on the Early Terminology of Christian Priesthood," in *The Sacrament of Holy Orders: Some papers and discussions concerning holy orders at a session of the Centre de Pastorale Liturgique, 1955* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1962), 113; James Burtchaell, *From Synagogue to Church: Public Services and Offices in the Earliest Christian Communities* (New York: Cambridge U.P., 1992), 323; Richard Nelson, *Raising Up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 171; Colin Bulley, *The Priesthood of Some Believers: Developments from the General to the Special Priesthood in the Christian Literature of the First Three Centuries* (Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2000), 320–321; and Garry Wills, *Why Priests?: A Failed Tradition* (New York: Viking, 2013), 1–3, 142.

3 Garry Wills, *Why Priests?*, 142.

into third-century considerations of a ministerial priesthood.[4] Perhaps the late acceptance of the book accounts for this.

As to the theological force of the argument, the third-century writers never deny Christ's high-priesthood; rather, they affirm it whole-heartedly even while maintaining a ministerial human priesthood. In other words, Christ's priesthood and a Christian ministerial priesthood were not deemed mutually exclusive to these writers, and in many cases, the two priesthoods are inter-related so that the Christian ministerial priesthood derives from Christ's priesthood.[5] Moreover, none of the texts and thinkers I examined in the first seven chapters ever claim that the Levitical priesthood is appropriated *literally* in a Christian ministerial priesthood. It is this notion of a literal continuance of the Levitical priesthood that the book of Hebrews so forcefully wishes to deny with the coming of a new priesthood in Christ. As I have demonstrated in the preceding pages, however, third-century thinkers and texts always take up the Levitical priesthood as a typological or figural (not literal) model for Christian ministry; in this way, the Levitical priesthood evoked a correspondence with Christian ministry, yet with important differences. By employing such figural reading, these writers accepted the reality that the Levitical priesthood no longer existed, and in this sense, there is no contradiction with the book of Hebrews.[6]

Another common argument is that the New Testament opposes the concept of any ministerial priesthood at all, not just a continuance of the Levitical priesthood. In brief, a close examination of certain early Christian writers (such as Paul, the Didache, and 1 Clement) will reveal that several first and second-century Christian writers were not opposed to the notion

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4 See, for example, R.P.C. Hanson, *Christian Priesthood Examined* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1979), 41, for comments about Hebrews influence on the early church.

5 For example, see J.A. McGuckin, "Origen's Doctrine of Priesthood: I," *Clergy Review* 70 no. 8 (1985): 277–278; and John D. Laurance, *'Priest' as Type of Christ: The Leader of the Eucharist in Salvation History according to Cyprian of Carthage* (New York: Peter Lang, 1984), 249–179.

6 Admittedly, the book of Hebrews not only abrogates the Levitical priesthood but also institutes a new (Melchizedekian) priesthood in Christ. This is an interesting point and it would be well worth considering the way the early church fathers address the Melchizedekian priesthood in light of a Christian ministerial priesthood. I believe there is a place for further exploration in this direction, and hope to address these questions in research at a later date.

of Christian leadership being cast in priestly molds.[7] This is different, to be sure, than saying that Paul, for example, calls Christian ministers "priests," but it does demonstrate that the lack of designating a minister as a *hiereus* does not prove outright opposition to the appropriation of priestly imagery for Christian leadership. In other words, early Christian appropriation of priestly images and models, while not explicitly designating Christian leaders as priests, does provide a certain language, vocabulary and interpretive reading of Scripture (e.g. the use of typology) which shapes the way later writers will understand the developing office of the bishop and the way they would further develop and employ these motifs. There is then a continuity of thought here, along with a certain degree of development.

The Apostle Paul

The most important Pauline text for my purposes comes from Romans 15:15–16 in which Paul reminds his audience of

> the grace which was given to me by God to be a minister (*leitourgos*) of Christ Jesus to the gentiles in the priestly service (*hierourgounta*) of the gospel of God, in order that the offering (*prosphora*) of the gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.[8]

Paul begins this pericope by referring to himself as a "*leitourgos* of Christ Jesus." Scholars have noted that the term *leitourgos* can have reference to both secular and sacred functions, and that even in this same epistle, Paul uses the term to refer to the civil authorities (Rom 13:6). The LXX likewise uses this term to refer to both cultic duties and public service.[9] Which meaning does Paul intend in this passage?

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7 I mention these in particular because they contain important passages that demonstrate the use of "priestly images" for leadership. Other second century texts such as Ignatius of Antioch and Justin Martyr do not contain any such priestly references; for that reason I have omitted them from this discussion. Irenaeus of Lyons (late second century), likewise never designates a Christian leader a priest, although see *Against Heresies* 4.8.3 for a brief passage that speaks of the "sacerdotal rank" of the apostles and all believers in general.

8 All translations are my own unless indicated otherwise.

9 For the neutral sense of public service to a master or king, see e.g. Josh 1:1; 2 Sam 13:18; and 1 Kgs 10:5. Used in the sense of cultic service, see e.g. Deut 17:12; 1 Sam 2:11; Is 61:6; Neh 10:40; and Lk 1:23. See also Joseph Ponthot, "L'expression cultuelle du ministère

A contextual reading of the passage indicates that Paul intends to evoke the cultic sense of *leitourgos*, by referencing his "priestly service (*hierourgouonta*) of the gospel of God." *Hierourgein*, "to serve as a priest," helps to qualify and explain in what sense Paul is a *leitourgos*. What makes him a "minister" of Christ is his "priestly service" of preaching the gospel to the gentiles. Thus, as Joseph Fitzmeyer observes, although *leitourgos* is not Paul's only designation for his work, it remains significant nonetheless that in this passage, Paul does not describe his role as a "servant" (*diakonos*), nor "steward" (*oikonomos*), but as "cultic minister" (*leitourgos*).[10] Combine his use of *leitourgos* and *hierourgein* with his sacrificial reference near the end of the passage ("in order that the offering [*prosphora*] of the gentiles might be acceptable") and it becomes clear that Paul is explicitly working with priestly imagery to describe his apostolic work. Within this brief pericope, Paul employs three different terms (*leitourgos*, *hierourgein*, and *prosphora*) to describe his apostolic work—all of which relate to priestly service. The cumulative force of these terms compels us to recognize that Paul displays no reservations about describing his Christian ministry as priestly in character, even if not in title.

Not all scholars, of course, are willing to accept this obvious reading. C.E.B. Cranfield, for example, while admitting that *leitourgos* "does have a sacral sense," prefers to translate *hierourgounta* as "serve with a holy service" rather than "serve as a priest."[11] He argues that *hierourgein* carries a priestly reference only in relationship to a sacrificial offering and concludes that the impossibility of such usage here is "obvious."[12] I find this an amazing example of exegetical gymnastics, especially since Paul explicitly mentions the notion of sacrifice in his ministry: the *prosphora* of the gentiles are a part of his apostolic (priestly) ministry! The preaching of the gospel to the gentiles, and in turn their conversion, becomes the offering (*prosphora*) which Paul submits to God. Much more to the point are Fitzmeyer's comments that "in his mission to the Gentiles, Paul sees his function to be like that of a Jewish priest

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paulinien selon Rom 15,16," in *L'apôtre Paul: personnalité, style et conception du ministère*, ed. A Vanhoye (Leuven : Leueven University Press, 1986), 256, for some further discussion of this.

10 Joseph Fitzmeyer, *Romans*, Anchor Bible Commentary 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 711. Paul uses *diakonos* in 2 Cor 3:6 and *oikonomos* in 1 Cor 4:1.

11 C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975), 755–756.

12 Cranfield, *Romans*, 756.

dedicated to the service of God in his Temple."[13] Even Cranfield himself notes that the term *hierourgein* can be used in a priestly sense in relationship to the task of preaching or teaching. In a discussion of Eleazer the priest, 4 Maccabees 7:8 witnesses a variant reading which renders *tous demiourgountas ton nomon*, as *hierourgounta ton nomon*.[14] Thus, teaching or preaching can in fact be the object of priestly activity. Remember, too, as I have shown in earlier chapters, that part of the range of tasks assigned to Israelite priests entailed teaching or preaching the law (e.g. Deut. 33:10; Hos. 4:4–6; Mal. 2:5–8). There is nothing unusual about combining a priestly reference with the task of preaching, as Paul does here.

In our current passage, then, Paul combines both the *kerygmatic* and the sacrificial aspects of his work under the model of a "minister" (*leitourgos*) exercising his "priestly service" (*hierourgein*). He preaches the gospel to the gentiles *and* offers them as a *prosphora* acceptable to God. Paul may not call himself a *hiereus*, but he has no hesitations about the appropriation of the priestly image as a metaphor for his Christian ministry.[15]

A second Pauline text worth examining is 1 Corinthians 9:13–14. Paul begins this chapter with a defense of his rights as an apostle, particularly his right to "material benefits" from his congregations. Even though Paul forgoes his right to such benefits, he reasserts the principle, asking, "Do you not know that those who work with the holy things (*ta hiera*) eat the things from the temple, and those who serve at the altar (*thysiastērion*) share in the altar? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who preach the gospel should live by the gospel" (1 Cor 9:13–14).[16] Here, Paul draws directly upon the analogy between Christian preachers and cultic priests, those who "work with holy things" and "serve at the altar." Paul suggests that just as a priest receives his livelihood from his priestly work, so also the Christian minister ought to be

13 Fitzmeyer, *Romans*, 711.

14 As Cranfield notes, this variant is found in the Sixtine edition of the LXX, but not recorded in Rahlf's edition (*Romans*, 756).

15 See also Everett L. Wilson, "The Priestly Service of the Gospel of God: An Exegesis of Romans 15:16," *The Covenant Quarterly* 30 (1972): 31–40; and Jean Colson, *Ministre de Jésus-Christ ou le sacerdoce de l'évangile: étude sur la condition sacerdotale des ministers chrétiens dans l'église primitive* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1965), 181–207, for a similar reading on this passage.

16 The "command of the Lord" may refer to Matt 10:10 and Lk 10:7–8. See Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1967), 187; and William Orr and James Arthur Walther, *1 Corinthians*, Anchor Bible Series 32 (New York: Doubelday, 1964), 239.

supported by his gospel work. The analogy only works if there is some assumed continuity between the work of one and the work of the other.

On the surface, it is not clear whether Paul refers to Israelite priests or pagan priests, and as it stands, either reference could be taken legitimately. However, I suggest that while Paul leaves open the possibility of a pagan priestly analogy, he is most likely thinking of biblical priests. Just a few verses prior, Paul cites Deut. 25:4 ("You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain") and concludes: "Does God care about oxen or does he speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake" (1 Cor. 9:9–10). He is drawing upon Old Testament models to make his case.

Then in chapter 10, he continues his Christian appropriation of Old Testament events, stating:

> I want you to know, brethren, that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink… Nevertheless God was not pleased with most of them… Now these things happened as types (*typoi*) for us (1 Cor 10:1–6).

In other words, Paul sees the events of the Old Testament as working "types" and models upon which Christians draw in order to gain a fuller realization of their own situation. The Old Testament law about oxen becomes a model for the rights of the Christian minister. The Old Testament exodus event and wilderness wandering become "types" (*typoi*) of the Christian life. Between these two bookend examples (1 Cor. 9:9–10 & 1 Cor. 10:1–6), Paul inserts the analogy between priestly service and Christian preaching, between priestly rights and apostolic rights (1 Cor. 9:13–14). The surrounding context from 9:9–10:6 thus suggests that Paul is working primarily from Old Testament, biblical models, rather than pagan ones.[17] Paul, therefore, likely derives his reference to the entitlements of priests for their work in the temple

17 Of course, they need not be mutually exclusive for Paul's argument to work, and many in his congregation may have thought of pagan priests first. C.K. Barrett, for example, takes this reference to be primarily pagan priesthood, although even he admits "it does apply to the Jewish also" (*The First Epistle to the Corinthians* [London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968], 207). Harry Nasuti makes the same point that "whether the temple referred to here is the Jewish Temple or the pagan temples (or both), the point [of Paul's argument] is the same" ("The Woes of the Prophets and the Rights of the Apostle: The Internal Dynamics of 1 Corinthians 9," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 50 [1988]: 246–264, at 251). The larger context of Paul's argument, however, suggests he was thinking in biblical terms.

from Numbers 18:8–24 which speaks explicitly of the priests share of the "holy things." Thus, the work of the Christian leader "is analogous to that of the Levitical temple servants so far as support is concerned."[18]

Again we see that while Paul does not designate himself a *hiereus* in explicit terminology, he freely draws upon biblical priestly service as an analogy, or typology, for Christian leadership. Among the variety of models and paradigms Paul uses to explain the work of Christian ministry, the priestly image is one which he demonstrates no hesitation in using. To that end, Paul provides a set of vocabulary and an interpretive method which will continue to shape the thought and practice of the later church. Paul's suggestion of a typological correspondence between the Israelite people and the Christian church, on the one hand, and Old Testament priesthood and Christian leadership, on the other hand, is then picked up and developed by subsequent Christian thinkers. As I have demonstrated in the previous chapters, later writers turn to these same ideas in 1 Corinthians 9 for their understanding of the bishop as a priest.[19]

Didache

Even before the third century, the Didache[20] also commands: "you will give the first-fruits to the prophets, for they are your high-priests (*archiereis*),"[21] taking Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 9 one step further. Where Paul was content to allow the priestly imagery to work out an analogy with Christian leadership, the *Didache* goes further by explicitly designating one such Christian leader, the prophet, as a "high-priest." Although it seems to advance the priestly imagery (which Paul was happy to employ) in more concrete terms (calling the prophets "high-priests"), such explicit designation will not occur again until Tertullian

18 Orr and Walther, *1 Corinthians*, 242.

19 See for example *Didascalia* 8; Greek: AC 2.25, SC 320: 228–230; and Origen, *Hom. Num.* 11.2.2, SC 442: 22–24.

20 The Didache is dated widely, from AD 50 to the fourth century. For issues of dating, see *La doctrine des douze apôtres*, ed. Willy Rordorf and André Tuilier, *Sources chrétiennes* 248 (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1978), 91–99; *La Didache: instructions des apôtres*, ed. Jean Paul Audet (Paris: Librairie Lecoffre, 1958), 187–210; and Ray Robert Noll, *Christian Ministerial Priesthood: A Search for its Beginnings in the Primary Documents of the Apostolic Fathers* (San Francisco: Catholic Scholars Press, 1993), 281–284. There is general agreement that the Didache can be dated to the end of the first or beginning of the second century and is likely of Syrian origin.

21 *Didache* 13.3, SC 248: 190.

nearly a century later. For this reason, many scholars have suggested that these lines in the Didache are a later interpolation into an earlier text.[22] The argument for a later interpolation, however, runs something like this: since we know that priestly designations did not develop until the early-third century, *any* priestly designations we find in earlier texts must be later interpolations.

Although this presents an interesting problem, it is not enough, in my opinion, to force the conclusion that Didache 13.3 is late. The difficulty with such a conclusion is that, if it is the hand of an interpolator, one would expect the designation of "priest" to be applied to the bishop since (as I have shown in my earlier chapters) this is the office designated as such in the third century. A later interpolator would be attempting to bolster such a designation in his own day. Yet, this is precisely what the author of this pericope does not do. The application of "priest" is not to the bishop, but to the prophet, an office that receives very little attention by the third century, and thus makes no sense as a later interpolation. It seems more likely that Didache 13.3 is original and demonstrates that the priestly image was still a working analogy, even though its application was not yet firmly decided upon. The Didache attaches the priestly designation to prophets, but only a single time, and no other text of the second century follows suit in calling the Christian prophet a "high-priest." Not much more can be said here except that the Didache represents an anomaly of explicit priestly nomenclature for Christian leadership. In this sense, while the Didache advances Paul's correspondence between Christian leadership and priestly service, the later church's failure to seize upon the prophet-priest connection indicates that this understanding was not widespread.

1 Clement

I move now to the next significant passage: 1 Clement 40–44.[23] In this Roman epistle to the Corinthian Christians, the author, commonly designated as Clement, writes to address specific problems within the Christian community

22 See for example, Noll, *Priesthood*, 275–277; and J.P. Audet, *La Didache*, 105–110. Rordorf and Tuilier, on the other hand, argue that this allusion to the giving of first-fruits "est également caractéristique des milieux judéo-chrétiens du Ier siècle de notre ère" (*La Didache*, 95).

23 1 Clement is generally recognized to have been written close to AD 96. See Clement of Rome, *Épître aux Corinthiens* (*Source chretiénnes* 167), ed. A. Jaubert (Paris : Les Éditions du Cerf, 1971), 15–23; and Colson, *Ministre*, 216.

in Corinth. Members in the Corinthian church had deposed several Christian leaders in defiance of their authority. Clement writes to admonish them toward better order and behavior. In doing so, Clement draws upon a multitude of examples from Jewish and Christian history to warn them against such divisions and jealousy.

One of the major themes of this work is that of order (*taxis*) as God's will for his people. The Corinthians, by their unlawful deposition of certain presbyters, have disrupted this *taxis*. Clement writes not only to remind them of God's concern for *taxis* in the community, but that Christ himself has established such order for the church:

> We are obligated to do all things with order (*taxei*)…The Master [i.e. Christ] has ordered sacrifices and services to be carried out, not at random and in a disorderly manner, but at ordained times and seasons. He has ordained, by his sovereign will, where and by whom he wants them to be carried out.[24]

In other words, the necessity of order (*taxis*) in the community is a matter of obedience to divine will. Clement then grounds the admonition for order in a specific example. Still speaking of the Christian situation in Corinth, Clement continues:

> Therefore, those who make their offerings at the times commanded are acceptable and blessed; for following the laws of the Master, they do not sin. For to the high-priest (*archierei*) are given ministries of his own, to the priests (*hiereusin*) his own place has been prescribed, and upon the Levites (*leuitais*) their own services are laid.[25]

The *taxis* required of the Christian community is linked with the Levitical priestly structure found in the Old Testament. The Old Testament priests had their proper services and their proper place; so too, Christian leaders and laity must respect their office.[26]

Clement then recounts that the prescription of the law required that sacrifices be made at Jerusalem, in front of the sanctuary, with a blameless gift examined by the high-priest. Those who act against these prescriptions "will

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24 1 Clement 40.1–3, *SC* 167: 166.

25 1 Clement 40.4–5, *SC* 167: 166.

26 A. Jaubert ("Thèmes lévitique dans la prima Clementis," *Vigiliae Christianae* 18 [1964]: 195–97) notes as well that the phrase *en taxei* was often used to describe *priestly* order in Jewish and Christian literature (see 1 Esdras 1:5; 1QS 2.22; Lk 1:8; Heb. 5:10).

have death as their penalty,"[27] serving as a reminder to the Corinthians that as for Israel, so too for Christians, prescribed order cannot be flouted without consequence.

Clement drives home the point even further by recourse to another Old Testament example, namely, the strife and contention that arose over the Israelite priesthood in Numbers 17. In that situation, wise-Moses ordered twelve rods to be gathered, one for each tribe, and placed them in the Tabernacle. The next day the rod of Aaron had sprouted, indicating that he was divinely chosen for the priesthood and thereby preventing future strife.[28] Clement draws a parallel with Christian bishops:

> Our apostles knew, through our Lord Jesus Christ, that there would be strife concerning the name of the bishop. For this reason, receiving perfect foreknowledge, they established bishops and deacons and afterwards gave the additional law that when they died, other approved men would take over their ministry (*leitourgian*).[29]

Throughout this lengthy pericope (40–44), Clement's main concern is to reestablish proper order (*taxis*) in the Corinthian community. His recourse to apostolic models and Old Testament examples works to reinforce his concern for this order. Using different examples elsewhere in the epistle, he exhorts the same principle in chapter 20 (using the *taxis* of the cosmos) and in chapter 37 (using the *taxis* of the Roman army). Thus, it is important to observe that as comfortable as Clement is with drawing upon priestly, even Levitical, paradigms for Christian leadership, his main concern is for *taxis*, not in explicitly designating any Christian leader a *hiereus*. Robert Noll rightly cautions, "To say that in paragraphs 43 and 44 Clement was trying to make the Christian *episcope* into a priesthood, is to miss the whole point of the analogy,"[30] namely that order (*taxis*), not priesthood, is the issue at stake. Likewise Ernst Dassmann concludes, "the comparison by Clement concerns not so much the specific functions of the Levitical priesthood and ecclesial offices, but the order (*Ordnung*) required for both in which their service must be carried out."[31] For Clement, Christian polity mirrors the *taxis* displayed in

27 1 Clement 41.3, *SC* 167: 168.

28 1 Clement 43.

29 1 Clement 44.1–2, *SC* 167: 172.

30 Noll, *Priesthood*, 79.

31 „Der Vergleich bei Klemens betrifft ja nicht die spezifischen Funktionen der levitischen Priester und kirchlichen Ämter, sondern die für beide geforderte Ordnung, in der sich ihr

Israelite priestly polity. Christian bishops are never designated explicitly as "priests"; yet again, as in Paul, Clement does not shy away from the appropriation of priestly service as a working imagery for Christian ministry.

An Ecclesiology of Continuity with Israel

As should be obvious by now, behind each of these texts (Paul, the Didache and 1 Clement) is an underlying notion of the church as a continuation of Israel, yet with transformation. The assumption is that the church's relationship with biblical Israel is such that comparisons between the church and Israel, and between Christian leadership and Israelite leadership, are accepted entirely without apology. In other words, the idea expressed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:6 that "these things were types (*typoi*) for us" is a working ecclesiological hermeneutic for the earliest Christian thinkers. Old Testament events and institutions become working "types" which can be appropriated and applied to Christian realities.

In Galatians 3 for example, Paul works out a careful argument that the message he has preached to the gentiles (and their subsequent acceptance of Christ as Messiah) is in fact nothing less than God's fulfillment of his promises to Abraham. He concludes chapter 3 with a climactic summary statement: "But if you are Christ's, then you are the offspring of Abraham, heirs according to the promise" (3:29). The work of God through Christ, says Paul, is not a betrayal of Israel or a discarding of Israel, but a fulfillment, a renewing of Israel. It is what David Yeago calls a "re-narration of the story of Israel."[32] The connection between the church and Israel is so intimate that Paul can conclude his epistle to a gentile church: "Peace and mercy upon all those who walk by this rule, and on the Israel of God (*Israel tou Theou*)" (6:15), referring to his gentile congregation.

Likewise in Romans 9–11, Paul articulates his understanding that "Israel" has been redefined. Pure race or lineage does not make one a child of

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Dienst vollziehen muß."Ernst Dassmann, "Die Bedeutung des alten Testaments für das Verständnis des kirchlichen Amtes in der frühpatristischen Theologie," *Bibel und Leben* 11 (1970): 203. See also Hans von Campenhausen for similar conclusions (*Kirchliches Amt und geistliche Vollmacht in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* [Tübinigen: Mohr, 1963], 100.

32 David Yeago, "Messiah's People: The Culture of the Church in the Midst of the Nations," *Pro Ecclesia* 6 no.1 (1997): 153. Yeago's work is in large part based upon his reading of Paul and Pauline texts.

Abraham (9:6–8); rather those who have embraced "righteousness through faith" (9:30), whether Jew or gentile, are counted among the people of God. The gentiles are said to be "grafted in" (11:17) to the "vine" of Israel, thereby making gentiles into Israelites. Thus the church, as Paul sees it, is nothing less than God's Israel fulfilled and expanded to include the gentiles. It is for this reason that Paul can say that gentile believers, like Isaac, are "children of promise" (Gal 4:28), and that the Old Testament events "were types for us," that is for gentile Christians (1 Cor 10:6).

Likewise the Didache and 1 Clement both demonstrate an implicit acceptance of an ecclesiological correspondence between Israel and the church. Although there is no monolithic portrayal of Jews and Judaism by Christian writers in the sub-apostolic period, nevertheless, there are certain shared perspectives on God's work with Israel and the church, namely that Israel was "the most important vehicle of God's revelation to mankind before Christ,"[33] and that the church holds some element of continuity with God's prior work through Israel.

The Didache, for example, opens with six chapters on the "2-ways," a form of parenesis with clear Jewish roots.[34] Didache 1.2, drawing upon Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, commands: "You will love the God who made you and your neighbor as yourself."[35] Didache 2.1–3 explicitly draws upon the Decalogue as prescriptions for the Christian community (not to murder, commit adultery, steal, covet, or bear false witness). Likewise, its prescriptions and rules about the offering of first-fruits (ch 13) also indicate influence from Old Testament and Jewish practice. From such texts, we can well conclude with J.H. Charlesworth that this particular community thought "they belonged within Israel and continued to be faithful 'Jews.'"[36]

Clement also draws upon a myriad of Old Testament examples for the church such as Abel, Jacob, Moses, Noah, Jonah, Elijah, and Abraham. Elsewhere, considering Deuteronomy 32:8–9 regarding Israel being assigned

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33 See Demetrios Constantelos, "Jews and Judaism in the Early Greek Fathers (100 A.D. – 500 A.D.)," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 23 (1978): 147. The *Epistle of Barnabas* might be one exception to this generality.

34 For a discussion of the Jewish roots of the Didache, see Huub van de Sandt and David Flusser, *The Didache: Its Jewish Sources and its Place in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002); and Marcello de Verme, *Didache and Judaism: Jewish Roots of an Ancient Christian-Jewish Work* (New York: T & T Clark, 2004).

35 Didache 1.2, SC 248: 142.

36 In the preface of Verme's work (*Didache and Judaism*, xii).

as "the portion (*meris*) of the Lord" (32:9), the author concludes: "Therefore since we [i.e. the church] are a holy portion (*hagia meris*), let us do all the deeds of holiness."[37] Christians, according to Clement, are separate from both "gentiles" (i.e. pagans) and "Jews" while yet maintaining a continuity with the Israel of the Old Testament.[38]

Given this ecclesiological backdrop to Paul, the Didache, and 1 Clement, it should come as no surprise that these writers feel free to play on other Old Testament images and events such as the priesthood. Paul and the Didache liken Christian leadership to the priestly ministry of *leitourgia*, such that Christian ministers should be supported by their congregations, just as Israelite priests were supported by the Israelites. Clement's robust church-Israel ecclesiology enables him, likewise, to draw upon the orderliness of Old Testament priesthood as a model for order and structure in Christian churches. Important to note, this is not the same thing as saying explicitly that Christian leaders are Christian priests, but it does demonstrate that 1.) the church-Israel continuity is clearly a part of Paul's (and the early church's) thinking and 2.) early Christians had no objection to using the Israelite priestly imagery as a vivid working analogy or typology for the current Christian ministry of their day.

Thus in the previous chapters, of the two aspects that I argued lay behind the third-century designation of a Christian bishop as a "priest," the first (the ecclesiology that sees the church in continuity with Israel) is not only found in the earliest Christian texts, but also lies as the backdrop for the ease with which priestly images begin to be used as analogies for Christian ministry. This church-Israel ecclesiological trajectory is present even in the first century and would continue to shape the way later Christian writers understood the church and its ministerial leadership.

A Cultural or Political Ecclesiology

What, then, of the second ecclesiological aspect, that of the church as a *polis* or "culture"? Does this reality find expression in earlier Christian texts such as the New Testament and sub-apostolic writers? A number of scholars have

37 1 Clement 29–30, *SC* 167: 148. This of course echoes the earlier sentiments of 1 Pet 2:9: "you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people."

38 See Stanley Harakas' comments, "The Relationship of Church and Synagogue in the Apostolic Fathers," *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly* 11 no.3 (1967): 125–26, 135.

demonstrated that Christianity, from the very beginning, was a "public" religion with political ramifications.[39] Perhaps one of the most outspoken and significant advocates of such an understanding of the church was the German Catholic theologian of the early twentieth century, Erik Peterson.[40] Critiquing primarily the German Protestantism of his day and its notion of the church as a non-dogmatic, non-sacramental, non-legalistic entity, Peterson articulated a defense of the church as a visible and public assembly: "In an analogous way, one could call the Christian *ekklēsia* the assembly of the full citizens of the heavenly city, gathered together to perform certain ritual acts. The cult which it celebrates is a public cult, not a celebration of the Mysteries."[41] Along these lines, Peterson repeatedly stressed the "public and legal character" (*öffentlich-rechtlichen Charakter*) of the church. Likewise, Peterson argued that the early Christian liturgy (e.g. baptism, Eucharist, marriage, ordination, even Psalm-singing) was a *public* ritual, not a private action, and through such performance the church appropriated for itself and transformed political symbols and meaning.[42] Where do scholars such as Peterson derive this understanding of the early church?

Consider for example the response of the earliest followers of Jesus after Acts 2. It was not to hide in private, but to take the message forth, declaring it publicly both in the synagogue and other populated venues (cf. Acts 17). The earliest Christian apologists also, as Paul Finney observes, "were primarily concerned to draw Christianity into the public realm. They sought to make

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39 See for example, Erik Peterson, "Von den Engeln," and "Die Kirche," in *Theologische Traktate* (Wurzburg: Echter, 1951), 327–407 and 411–429. Michael Hollerich, "Retrieving a Neglected Critique of the Church, Theology and Secularization in Weimar Germany," *Pro Ecclesia* 2 no.3 (1993): 305–332; Paul Corby Finney, *The Invisible God: The Earliest Christians on Art* (New York: Oxford U.P., 1994), esp. 104–108 and 287–289; Reinhard Hütter, "The Church as Public: Dogma, Practice, and the Holy Spirit," *Pro Ecclesia* 3 no.3 (1994): 334–361; Yeago, "Messiah's People," 146–171; and Peter Leithart, *Against Christianity* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003), esp. 16–90.

40 I am indebted to Michael Hollerich's insightful summary of Peterson's work (mentioned in the previous footnote).

41 "Man könnte in analoger Weise die christliche *ekklēsia* die zum Vollzug bestimmter Kulthanglungen zusammentetrende Versammlung der Vollbürger der Himmelsstadt nennen. Der Kult, den sie feiert, ist ein öffentlicher Kult und keine Mysterienfeier." Peterson, "Die Kirche," 422.

42 Peterson, "Von den Engeln," 369–371. See also Hollerich, "Retrieving a Neglected Critique," 315, for a succinct summary of these ideas in Peterson.

their religion accessible, intelligible, and above all, visible."[43] In other words, Christianity by its very theological claims and social structures was conceived as a vital alternate society living in distinction from the Greco-Roman citizens and Second-Temple Jews. As David Yeago notes, "the church is a public reality in its own right, the civic assembly of the eschatological city."[44] This "public reality" is constituted both by its religio-political beliefs and by its socio-theological practices such that "the church is a culture in its own right; the church has its own culture, which is not simply a function of the cultures of the nations among which it dwells."[45] It is worth recalling here the working definition of "culture" which I am using, taken also from Yeago: "a complex of symbols and practices, communally acknowledged as significant, enclosed within an overarching meta-narrative, which shapes the perceptions, experience, and sense of identity of a community."[46] (Remember the example of American patriotism and the story of the new world as a 'civic culture' in its own right).

Further, the church's "culture" or "*Öffentlichkeit*" (in the words of Erik Peterson), by its claims and practices, takes on a distinctly religio-political

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43 Finney, *Invisible God*, 288.

44 Yeago, "Messiah's People," 150.

45 Yeago, "Messiah's People," 150.

46 Yeago, "Messiah's People," 150. This, of course, is different than defining "culture" as connected to ethnicity, geography, language, and so on. Then again, "American culture" lacks many of these features as well; yet, we are able to speak in some sense of the culture of America. N.T. Wright notes, for example, that in the New Testament, Paul "is talking about the transfer from one community to another," but that the new community is marked out by certain beliefs (and I would add rites) "rather than by its racial origin, its dietary customs, its physical badges" ("Putting Paul Together Again: Toward a Synthesis of Pauline Theology [1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philippians, and Philemon]," in *Pauline Theology*, ed. Jouette Bassler, vol. 1 [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991], 201–202). Thus "culture" need not be tied necessarily to race, language or geography.

For this reason, I take exception to Paul Corby Finney's conclusion that Christianity was not a culture and that "the earliest Christians lacked the independent cultural foundations that gave other religions their identity" (*Invisible God*, 107). His conclusion derives from an understanding of culture as consisting of an *ethnos* with attributes of "land, government, economy, blood (kinship), language, religion and art" (Invisible *God*, 106). Once one understands "culture" more broadly as defined above, then one can conclude that the church was, in fact, a culture, even if not entirely visible to outsiders. Finney wants to suggest that the existence of "material culture" is the only indication of a "cultural reality" (*Invisible God*, 107). I find this to be too narrow a definition of culture, and argue instead that the emergence of a material culture around AD 200 is the visible expression of a cultural reality already present.

dimension such that Reinhard Hütter is correct in suggesting that for Christianity, "'public' and 'political' are synonyms."[47] Consider the *kerymatic* message found so often in the New Testament: "Jesus is Lord." Peter's public preaching to the Roman centurion Cornelius and his household in Acts 10:36 includes the declaration about Jesus: "This one is Lord of all" (*houtos estin pantōn kyrios*). These words in the ears of Roman citizens and officials could not but evoke a political counter claim to the assertion that "*ho pantōn kyrios kaisar*" (Caesar is lord of all).[48] The claims that "this one (*houtos*)" was Lord, and not Caesar, were radically religio-political claims, and those who followed Jesus were marking themselves as a new *polis*, under a new *kyrios*. Seen from this perspective, Christianity was not just one private religion subsumed under the larger empire or within smaller *poleis*. On the contrary, Christians saw themselves as an alternative society, a new *polis* at odds with the surrounding cultures of the empire. As Reinhard Hütter suggests, this social and theological reality "constituted the church as an identifiable public in distinction from the theologico-political public of the *Pax Romana*,"[49] making the church "nothing less than a revolution of the ancient political superstructure of *polis* and *oikos*."[50]

One can find similar claims in Paul's epistle to the Philippians.[51] Writing to citizens of a Roman colony, Paul employs the language of both community (*koinōnia*) and politics (*politeuma*), two concepts which often overlapped in antiquity. Stanley Stowers notes that "Greek and Roman writers frequently pointed out that friendship is the basis for both political and economic activity and institutions."[52] Aristotle, for example, said that "every city (*polis*) is some sort of community (*koinōnian*) and every community (*koinōnian*) has been established for the purpose of some good … The best community is called

47 Hütter, "The Church as Public," 349.

48 Epictetus, *Discourse* 4.1.12, ed. W.A. Oldfather, The Loeb Classical Library 2 (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1928), 246–248. For a fuller discussion of the political ramifications of the Christians' claim, see Kavin Rowe, "Luke-Acts and the Imperial Cult: A Way through the Conundrum?," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 27 no.3 (2005): 279–300, esp. 290–300.

49 Hütter, "The Church as Public," 348.

50 Hütter, "The Church as Public," 353.

51 For the following section, I am indebted to Peter Leithart for his exposition of this aspect of Philippians (*Against Christianity*, 27–30).

52 Stanley Stowers, "Friends and Enemies in the Politics of Heaven," in *Pauline Theology*, ed. Jouette Bassler, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 107.

the city (*polis*), the political community (*he koinōnia he politike*)."[53] Thus, when Paul rejoices in their "partnership (*koinōnia*) in the gospel" (1:5) and calls the Philippians "my partners (*synkoinōnous mou*) of the gospel" (1:7), he is designating them as a community of "friends," a *koinōnia*. The Christian community is therefore, for Paul, inherently political—their *koinōnia* works as a rival *polis* to the surrounding *polis* of Philippi.

One can see this political dimension early in the letter when Paul says, "Only live as citizens (*politeuesthe*) worthy of the gospel of Christ" (1:27). Translations such as "let your manner of life be" (RSV) or "conduct yourselves" (NASB) veil the distinctly political implications of Paul's words. Paul is not speaking here of general Christian living, but of the lifestyle of the new *polis* which is the Christian *koinōnia*.

Later, in Philippians 3:20, this political edge of the Christian community takes its sharpest form. There Paul reminds the Philippians that their citizenship as Romans in Philippi must be forsaken for the gospel: "For our citizenship (*politeuma*) belongs in heaven, from which we wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (*sōtēra kyrion Iesoun Christon*)." As N.T. Wright comments, "These are Caesar-titles. The whole verse says: Jesus is Lord, and Caesar isn't. Caesar's empire, of which Philippi is a colonial outpost, is the parody; Jesus' empire, of which the Philippian church is the colonial outpost, is the reality."[54] The Christian *koinōnia* is a Christian *polis*.[55]

These statements about Jesus as *pantōn kyrios* and the admonitions to "live as citizens of heaven (*politeuesthe*)" are religio-political claims; they are assertions which tell us something about the self-identity of the earliest Christians. From a very early date, they saw themselves as a unique *polis*, a distinct alternative society to the *polis* and larger culture around them. Because of this self-understanding, this newly forming *polis* would of necessity require boundaries delineating membership, rules to govern the community,

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53 Aristotle, *Politics* 1252a1–6, The Loeb Classical Library 264 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Press, 1932), 2.

54 N.T. Wright, "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," in *Paul and Politics: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl*, ed. Richard Horsley (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 2000), 173. See also Wes Howard-Brook, *The Church Before Christianity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001), 35.

55 Of course in other texts, Paul harbors no ill-will toward the Roman Empire. In Romans 13:1, for example, he explicitly commands: "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities." Nevertheless, his claims that Christ is the *kyrios* and that the church has its "citizenship" elsewhere clearly indicates a political ecclesiology in distinction from the surrounding Roman culture.

and above all, leadership that would conduct the community's living and worship. Moreover, because these Christians intended more than empty religio-political rhetoric, it should come as no surprise that we can also gain a window into their actual social world: the boundaries, rules and leadership of this new *polis*.

For the sake of space, one example will suffice.[56] 1 Corinthians 10–11 describes in some detail Christian worship in the community at Corinth. At the center of Paul's discussion in these chapters is the fellowship meal known as the Lord's Supper, later called the Eucharist. Since table fellowship in antiquity was crucial to community definition—it formed and held together the ancient *polis*[57]—Paul is quite concerned to deal with certain aberrations he sees in the Corinthian meal conduct.[58] Meals demonstrate a social reality. Normally stratified by class and economic factors, Paul urges the Corinthians toward a counter-cultural reality: full and equal participation in the Christian meal.[59] Jews and Greeks, rich and poor, are all to participate equally, thus demonstrating publicly the very reality and nature of their community in Christ. Paul reminds them that this meal displays a public reality not only because it "proclaims the Lord's death until he comes" (11:26) but also because it proclaims something about the unity of "the body" (*ta sōma*) of believers. Yeago is correct in suggesting that "the ritual meal-practice enacts

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56 I will be examining the Christian meal that came to be known as the Eucharist, but the initiatory rite of baptism could equally be used as an example. For some detailed discussion of baptism from a religio-political ("socio-theological") perspective, see Peter Leithart, *The Priesthood of the Plebs: A Theology of Baptism* (Eugen, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003).

57 In addition to the issues I will discuss in 1 Cor 10–11, consider also Galatians 2 for an example of how crucial meal fellowship was in antiquity. On the importance of meals in ancient society, see Simon Price, *Religions of the Ancient Greeks* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1999), 25–46; Keith Bradley, "The Roman Family at Dinner," in *Meals in a Social Context: Aspects of the Communal Meal in the Hellenistic and Roman World*, ed. Inge Nielsen and Hanne Sigismund Nielsen (Aarhus, DK: Aarhus U.P. 1998), 36–55; and L. Michael White, "Regulating Fellowship in the Communal Meal: Early Jewish and Christian Evidence," in *Meals in a Social Context: Aspects of the Communal Meal in the Hellenistic and Roman World*, ed. Inge Nielsen and Hanne Sigismund Nielsen (Aarhus, DK: Aarhus U.P. 1998), 177–205.

58 See Gerd Theissen's chapter "Social Integration and Sacramental Activity: An Analysis of 1 Cor. 11:17–34," in *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth*, ed. ibid, trans. John H. Schütz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), esp. 147–163.

59 See 1 Cor 11:20–22, 33–34 for the abuses Paul addresses and the solutions he offers.

publicly that into which baptism initiates [and] … determines the communal identity of the *ekklesia* and its members, as well as the social texture of its common life."[60] According to Paul, the Christian ritual meal is not a private, individual experience, but rather a social and communal event, public in character, commanded by Christ, and conducted by appropriate leaders in the community ("For I received from the Lord that which I delivered to you…" [11:23]). Paul's admonitions thus perpetuate the boundaries established by the Christian meal (in-group vs. out-group) as well as provide further rules and instructions for this new community. As a leader, Paul asserts his authority and responsibility to ensure this social-communal Christian event proceeds properly, and from his words in 1 Corinthians 11:23 he indicates that there is responsible leadership present in the Corinthian community who also must heed his words.

Furthermore, the chapter immediately preceding (1 Cor 10) provides a further glimpse into the meaning of the meal and its construal in relationship to the surrounding culture. There, Paul warns the Corinthians against idolatry, but immediately moves into a discussion of the Eucharist as a sacrificial meal:

> The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not participation (*koinōnia*) in the blood of Christ; and the bread which we break, is it not participation (*koinōnia*) in the body of Christ?… Consider Israel according to the flesh. Are not those who eat the sacrifices (*thysias*) participants (*koinōnoi*) in the altar (*thysiastērion*)? What then am I saying, that the food of the idols is anything or that an idol is anything? No, but that which they sacrifice (*thyousin*), they sacrifice to demons and not to God. But I do not want you to be participants (*koinōnous*) with demons. You are not able to drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you are not able to partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons (10:16–22).

Throughout this passage, Paul interweaves the themes of sacrifice (*thysia*) and participation (*koinōnia*). Just as the Israelites participated in the altar through their sacrifices, and pagans participate with demons through their sacrifices, so too the Christian fellowship meal (cast now also as a sacrifice)[61] is a

60 Yeago, "Messiah's People," 157.

61 Many scholars want to downplay this "sacrificial" aspect of the Christian meal, but the force of Paul's argument only works precisely if that aspect is assumed and maintained. For some discussion of this text in favor of such a reading, see especially Sverre Aalen, "Das Abendmahl als Opfermahl im Neuen Testament," *Novum Testamentum* 6 (1963): 128–152, esp. 128–146; and Helmut Moll, *Die Lehre von der Eucharistie als Opfer: Ein dogmengeschichtliche*

participation with Christ himself. Again, the political dimensions of the Christian meal come through. The Christian Eucharist is not a private gathering of friends and associates, but a public event, a communal sacrifice-alternative to the Greco-Roman participation in their local deities and sacrifices. As Yeago observes, "when Paul sets the church's *koinōnia* in Messiah's sacrifice over against the sacrificial practices of the Gentiles, he is effectively setting the *ekklesia* over against the ancient *polis* as a distinct, public, socio-cultural entity."[62] The Christian social structures, embodied in the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, proclaim itself a new *polis*, an alternative society in the ancient world, complete with its own boundary markers, rites, rules, and leadership.[63]

Briefly, the same portrayal of the church as a functioning *polis*, an alternate society, is found in the Didache and 1 Clement as well. The Didache, for example, delineates clear rules for the community, including the boundary markers of baptism and Eucharist (ch 7–15). Proper leadership functions are addressed and the community is depicted as a unique society in the broader culture. Likewise, 1 Clement displays a clear indication that structure and order is what constitutes the church. As Harakas notes, the Christian churches at this time "are obviously an organized, clearly differentiated body."[64] Hans von Campenhausen also notes this organizational reality to the church in 1 Clement: "It is no longer an issue of formerly choosing individual persons… but of an institution, which must be upheld as such and esteemed in its supporters."[65] In fact, this is precisely the point Clement urges; the church is an alternate society like Israel, a *polis* of its own, to such a degree that the order (*taxis*) found in one nation (Israel) quite readily applies to the Christian community, the church (ch 40–44). Such order, says Clement, must not be taken lightly nor subverted.

Untersuchung von Neuen Testament bis Irenaus Lyon (Koln: Peter Hanstein Verlag, 1975), esp. 60–66.

62 Yeago, "Messiah's People," 157.

63 In addition to the developing offices of ministry in the early church, consider also 1 Cor 6:1–11 where Paul admonishes believers not to go to the secular courts but to handle justice and judgment within the church itself.

64 Harakas, "Church and Synagogue," 134.

65 "Es geht nicht mehr um einmal erwählte Einzelpersonen... sondern es geht um eine Institution, die als solche gewahrt und in ihren Trägern geachtet werden muß." Von Campenhausen, *Kirchliches Amt*, 99.

Religio-Political Ecclesiology and a Ministerial Priesthood

Stepping back a moment from these observations on the early church as a *polis* or a culture in its own right,[66] we can now add the earlier observations about the church's ecclesiological connection with Israel. Combined, they create a forceful religio-political ecclesiology asserting that the new *polis* of the church, this new alternate society in the Greco-Roman world, was nothing less than the renewed *polis* (or nation) of Israel. Consider the sacrificial Eucharist in 1 Corinthians 10 again. In the church's setting up such a religio-political meal, as Leithart remarks,

> the church was simply following her Jewish predecessor. Israel was also a nation organized and bounded by festivals. Her calendar was a calendar of feasts and sacrifices… By setting up a new festival alongside the Jewish synagogue and Greek city, the church established an alternative *agora* and marked out new contours of civic order.[67]

The church was a unique *polis*, distinctly marked as an alternate society in continuity with the nation of Israel.

Likewise, and perhaps most foundational to early Christian ecclesiology, the term *ekklēsia* itself carries this dual notion of the church as a religio-political community, a renewed Israel existing as an alternate *polis* in the Greco-Roman world. In this milieu, *ekklēsia* meant "civic assembly," or as Erik Peterson notes: "a well-known institution of the *polis*. It is the assembly of the full citizens of a *polis*, gathered together for the performance of legal acts."[68] When Aristotle, for example, spoke of the assembly of citizens in a *polis*, he spoke of the *ekklēsia*.[69]

Yet the Septuagint also frequently employed this term to describe the nation of Israel. *Ekklēsia* occurs just over 100 times in the LXX, nearly all as a translation of the Hebrew *qahal* (assembly). Deuteronomy 9:10 and 18:16, for

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66 For the first three centuries, this ecclesial understanding was that the church was a culture "amidst the culture of the nations" (Yeago, "Messiah's People," 146). By the time we get to post-Constantine Eusebius, that ecclesiology has shifted to understanding the church as the Roman *polis* "of the Empire."

67 Leithart, *Against Christianity*, 89–90.

68 „…ist bekanntlich eine Institution der *polis*. Es ist die zum Vollzug von Rechtsakten zusammentretende Versammlung der Vollbürger einer *polis*." Peterson, "Die Kirche," 422.

69 E.g. *Politics* 1285a11, Loeb, 248.

example, speak of the constitution of Israel as a nation at Sinai as "the day of assembly (*hēmera ekklēsias*)." 1 Kings 8:14 twice speaks of Solomon's blessing of "the assembly of Israel (*ekklēsia Israēl*)." Many instances speak of the community of Israel specifically as the "assembly of the Lord" (*ekklēsia tou kyriou*) such as 1 Chronicles 28:8: "Now therefore in the sight of all Israel, the *ekklēsia kyriou*, and in the presence of our God…"[70]

The use of the term *ekklēsia* by early Christians, then, would have evoked a national-political meaning in two directions. As Howard-Brook explains, "Hellenized Jews raised on the Septuagint… would hear in *ekklēsia* the echo of God's calling out of Egypt a people destined to live outside of Egypt's orbit. Educated Gentiles who felt 'called to be saints' would likely recognize in *ekklēsia* the 'ancient' tradition of Greek democracy."[71] The earliest Christians were consciously identifying with both aspects of *ekklēsia* such that the early church's self-identity displayed a thoroughly religio-political ecclesiology.[72] The church was in continuity with Israel, existing in the space-time world as an alternate *polis*, with its own rites, organization, rules, and leadership.

I return now to the issue of priesthood. How does this religio-political ecclesiology relate to the development of a Christian ministerial priesthood? David Yeago's words are timely:

> The most striking thing about the church's culture, as Paul presents it, is that it is Israelite, but not, strictly speaking, Jewish… The church is Israel; it is what has become of Israel now that Messiah has come and the blessing of Abraham is going out to the gentiles. But at the same time, the church is not exactly 'Jewish', because it is an Israel in which covenant membership no longer rests on circumcision and Torah observance.[73]

Thus, thinking back on our definition of culture as entailing symbols and practices placed within the framework of a meta-narrative, one discovers that the organizing meta-narrative of the early church (especially Paul), was the story

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70 See also e.g. Deut 23:2; Neh 13:1; and Mic 2:5.

71 Howard-Brook, *Church*, 34.

72 E.g. consider the book of Galatians, written "to the *ekklēsiais* of Galatia." In a book written to Gentiles, Paul at the same time builds a careful case for the church's continuity with Israel and the promises to Abraham so that the church is the *Israel tou theou*. In this context, *ekklēsia* connotes both a Greco-Roman political gathering, and the assembly of Israel.

73 Yeago, "Messiah's People," 155. He further remarks, "Notice that this is not supercessionist; Paul does not think that the church is a new Israel, a replacement for Israel, but rather Israel itself renewed by the coming of the Messiah" (155).

of Israel.[74] The Christian leadership which oversaw the life and worship of this fulfilled Israel-*polis* already had, ecclesiologically speaking, links and correspondences with Israelite ministerial leadership (as we saw in Paul and later in 1 Clement). Their tasks of presiding over worship (especially the liturgical responsibilities and the task of preaching) comported very well with similar duties found in the Old Testament for Israelite priests (such as offering sacrifices and teaching the law). Thus, having already embraced the notion of the church as a *polis* fulfilling Israel, it is no stretch to understand why the Christian leadership would come to adhere to Israelite offices of priestly leadership.

In other words, the development of a Christian ministerial priesthood in the third century is not a radical break with earlier Christian thought and practice. Rather, the trajectories of language and ideas which shaped the church in this direction were already present from the first century. New conditions in later centuries only created an important context in which these trajectories could take fuller shape and expression. For example, once the Temple is destroyed in AD 70, cultic worship by Jewish priests in the Jerusalem Temple was impossible. The institutions of sacrifice and priesthood had to take on a new character, especially after the definitive defeat of the Jews by the Romans in AD 135. Andrew Chester, for example, notes that the hopes for God's deliverance and the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple after AD 70 did not immediately die out, but were instead fortified and reinforced until AD 135.[75] The Bar Kochba revolt from AD 132–135 indicates, if nothing else, this sustained hope. As Stephen Wilson has argued, with the consequential Roman ban on Jews in Jerusalem, AD 135 marks the much more decisive date for the definitive change in both Christianity and Judaism. There was now no longer a place to offer sacrifice; the role of the Jewish priest, which had continued to be active (or hopeful about reactivation) up until that time, by necessity receded into the background. As I discussed in my earlier chapters, within post second-Temple Judaism itself, the priestly authority and role was being superseded by the rabbinic sage.[76] The previously conspicuous priestly office, in its public role over the people and their animal sacrifice, was now disappearing.

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74 See Yeago, "Messiah's People," 156.

75 Andrew Chester, "The Parting of the Ways: Eschatology and Messianic Hope," in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70–135*, ed. James D.G. Dunn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 258–59.

76 See my earlier chapter 4 (*Didascalia Apostolorum*), especially the section on "Jewish-Christian Relations: A Political Ecclesiology."

Further, as the church wrestled with the Marcionite debate, it came to affirm the value and legitimacy of the Old Testament as books for the church. This, of course, was already the case for the earliest Christian writers such as Paul, but further clarification was needed in the years to come. As the church re-affirmed the Jewish Scriptures as their own, there was a strengthening of identification with the Israel of the Old Testament. Consider, for example, Irenaeus and his proto-covenant theology of the late second century. Only in affirming both the continuities with Israel, yet also the transformation of Israel, did the church retain the Old Testament and the identification of the church as the people of God, "Israel." The continued affirmation of the church in relationship with Israel, within the new post-AD 135 context, enabled Christians to appropriate and apply for themselves, more concretely, certain Israelite structures and institutions such as the model of Levitical priesthood.

Last, as I have shown, the Christian church demonstrated quite early a conscious awareness of itself as a *polis*, an alternate culture in the midst of the cultures of the nations; it was "public" in its message, organization, rituals, leadership and so on. Nevertheless, something was lacking to solidify its cultural visibility in the world: a material culture. Scholars such as L. Michael White and Paul Finney have demonstrated the noticeable shift in the expression of this Christian "culture" around the turn of the third century. Before that time, the earliest Christians lacked two essential things: land and capital.[77] Once they had grown enough, they began to acquire property and produce distinctly Christian art. As Finney observes, they were "transformed into something new, namely, a religious culture *materially* defined."[78] The previous notion of the church as a unique *polis* solidified in more concrete and material ways. One significant way this demonstrated itself was in the emergence of permanent places of worship. White, for example, found that this shift from pure house church to more permanent worship structures took place between AD 180–200. During this period, Christians began to renovate existing structures, and eventually to build new structures, for the purpose of Christian assembly and worship. In other words, a newly visible "sacred space" emerged at the end of the second and beginning of the third century.

As I have shown in the preceding chapters, it is clear that the rise of a Christian ministerial priesthood takes place precisely in this milieu. More important, the Christian writers of this period demonstrate an awareness of such

77 Finney, *Invisible God*, 108.

78 Finney, *Invisible God*, 110, emphasis mine.

"sacred space" within their articulations and discussions of Christian leaders as "priests." The roles and functions entailed in the office of Christian bishop are cast in the mold of Israelite priesthood as ones responsible to attend to the holy things, including sacred space. Just as the old covenant priests "stand and minister" before the Lord and his house, offering sacrifices, teaching the law, and guarding the sanctity of the Temple, so too Christian writers of the third and early-fourth centuries depict the Christian bishop as a "priest" who "stands and ministers" before the Lord, offering the church's sacrifices, teaching and preaching the Word, and guarding worship space. A final review of the evidence is now in order to highlight again these themes.

Summary of the Present Study

I began with an examination of Tertullian of Carthage, the first consistent witness to Christian leadership being designated a "priest." There the first indications emerged of an assumed connection between a Christian ministerial priesthood and a religio-political ecclesiology in the context of an emerging Christian material culture. Tertullian twice grounds his priestly designations in Old Testament texts in a way that the Levitical priesthood acts as a *figura* for Christian leadership. The relationship between this religio-political ecclesiology and an emerging Christian material culture appears especially clear in his treatise *De Pudicitia*, where Tertullian describes the Christian leaders as *sacerdotes* who, like the Israelite priests, must guard the sanctity (*sanctitas*) of the worship space, banishing the egregious sinner "from the threshold of the church."

The western church-order, *Apostolic Tradition*, also demonstrates this link between priesthood and a religio-political ecclesiology in similarly subtle ways. The Christian bishop is described as one who "stands and ministers" before the Lord, who offers the Eucharist, and who attends to Christian sacred space. The similarities with the Levitical priesthood of the Old Testament are striking, indicating the author's intentional evocation of the Levitical priesthood as a model or "type" for Christian leadership. This is, of course, one of the earliest periods of the development of a Christian material culture and as such, the *AT* only indicates its awareness to such emerging Christian space in the subtlest of terms such as *topos*, *locus* and Christian cemeteries. Nevertheless, this emerging Christian space plays an important part in the functions and responsibilities of the bishop-priest as described in the *AT*.

The eastern church-order known as the *Didascalia Apostolorum* continues this development in its description of the bishop as the "steward of God" and his "house." The connections with a Levitical priesthood become even stronger when the author describes the bishops as those who "serve in the holy tabernacle, the holy catholic church" and "who stand before the altar of the Lord your God." Combining these functional descriptions with the *DA*'s clear awareness of an emerging Christian sacred space (e.g. the layout of worship space, seeing the Tabernacle as a "type" of the church, the care over cemeteries), we find that the *DA's* portrayal of the bishop as a priest works on a typological level as well: just as the Israelite priest was an "attendant to God's house" (the physical Tabernacle or Temple), so too the bishop is the "steward of God's house" (the physical church building and Christian *sacra*).

Staying in the east, I demonstrated that Origen of Alexandria also displays similar connections between a Christian ministerial priesthood and a religio-political ecclesiology. Origen portrays the bishop's responsibilities of teaching, presiding over the Christian sacrifice, and spiritual leadership as parallels to priestly activity. Further, the combination of Origen's depiction of the church as an alternate *polis/ekklēsia* in the Greco-Roman world, with his robust understanding of the church in continuity with, yet transformation of, Israel, enables him to appropriate the Levitical priestly ministry of the Old Testament in a typological way for Christian leadership. Just as certain laws must be observed in the Tabernacle of Israel, so too, says Origen, certain rules "ought to be observed in the church of God by the priests of Christ (*sacerdotibus Christi*)." Like the nation of Israel, the church too, says Origen, exists as its own *polis*, complete with Christian sacred things (*sacra*), and a ministerial priesthood which teaches, sacrifices, and leads the people of God.

In the west, Cyprian of Carthage provides us with one of the strongest Christian attachments to the Levitical priesthood as a working typology for Christian episcopacy. Especially in their role as liturgical officiants and ecclesial authorities, the bishops are depicted by Cyprian as the Christian counterparts to Israelite priesthood. The old covenant rules for the institution of priesthood have become the "rule and pattern (*forma*) now held in the clergy (*in clero*)." Cyprian also affirms a religio-political ecclesiology by describing Israel as "a shadow and image of us" and by displaying a conscious awareness of Christian *sacra* (pulpits, altars, buildings). His description of the bishops as "attendants of God" who "wait on the altar" indicates that he has in mind the physical care of a physical church and altar. He sees the church as a worshipping community that occupies physical sacred space and involves sacred

objects within that liturgical context. Over this entire religio-political entity of the church presides the Christian bishop, cast in the model of the Levitical priest who, like the bishop, attends to God's house and to his sacred objects.

Finally, I examined one thinker in the fourth-century, post-Constantinian era: Eusebius of Caesarea. From an investigation of his panegyric on the dedication of the church building in Tyre, I demonstrated that Eusebius, likewise, couches his priestly designations of Christian bishops in a religio-political ecclesiology. The building of the Tyrian church becomes a reflection of Old Testament sacred places—the Tabernacle and the first and second Temples. Christian churches, repeatedly designated as "temples," contain "sacred areas," "thrones," and an "altar." In the midst of such comparisons, the old covenant priest is likened to the presiding bishop, "the consecrated priests (*hierōmenōn*) performing the religious services and appropriate rites of the church."

The depictions of Christian ministry in these six works are by no means monolithic and uniform. Different writers emphasize different aspects of episcopal duties and functions within the community. For some, the liturgical elements far outweigh the teaching duties. For others, just the opposite is the case. For still others, a balanced blend of liturgical, instructional, and governmental tasks adhere to the bishop's role within the community. Nevertheless, from this diverse portrait, certain common features emerge. All of these writers clearly designate the Christian bishop as a "priest" (*hiereus*/*sacerdos*). Further, each demonstrates an underlying religio-political ecclesiology as the backdrop to their sacerdotal designations. To be sure, the indications are slight in the earliest texts such as the *Apostolic Tradition*, but they grow and strengthen over time such that when we arrive at Eusebius the understanding of the church as a unique *polis*, fulfilling and transforming biblical Israel, combines with the specific functions and responsibilities of the Christian bishop to enable the designation "priest."

Furthermore, as an important correction to certain scholarship, Christian writers were not using the pagan priesthood as a model for their own ministerial priesthood. They always tied the priestly designations to Israel and the Old Testament; the functions of Christian priests paralleled Levitical priests, not pagan priests; and they were always careful to avoid the appearance of pagan evocations in the descriptions of their own priesthood. Equally obvious (and corrective) by now, the offering of the sacrificial Eucharist, though central to the bishop's duties in the church, does not play as significant a role in the development of a Christian ministerial priesthood as many scholars have suggested. For some the priest's role over the Christian sacrifice was crucial

(Cyprian); for others, however, the link between Christian priesthood and Eucharistic sacrifice is very dim at best (*AT*, *DA*, Origen). For this reason, the explanation that the bishop's role in offering the Eucharistic sacrifice caused the development of a Christian ministerial priesthood remains inadequate.

Instead, understanding the broader religio-political ecclesiology of these Christian writers, a better explanation for the rise and development of a Christian ministerial priesthood is understood as a working typology of the Levitical priesthood in the third and fourth century. Just as the old covenant priests of the nation of Israel presided over the liturgical and instructional aspects of Israelite worship, and cared for the holy things in the physical Temple of God, so too the Christian bishop is portrayed typologically as the Christian "priest" who presides over Christian liturgical and instructional aspects of the church's worship, and cares for the *sacra* in the physical church of God. The earlier priestly analogies of the first two centuries (Paul, Didache, and 1 Clement) become more concrete in application as the religio-political variables create an ideal context for the development of an explicit ministerial priesthood. Important to note, these religio-political variables do not *cause* that development; they merely create an appropriate context in which prior trajectories can more fully develop and express themselves in new, yet consistent ways with the old. Consider for example, the relationship between trees and birds. Trees do not *cause* birds to live in their branches, but they do create the right environment for birds to come and live there. So too, these religio-political factors, along with the emergence of a Christian material culture, do not *cause* a priesthood to be developed, but they do create an appropriate context in which such realities can find a home.

Thus, the emergence of a Christian ministerial priesthood is not a departure from earlier Christian theology and social structure, but a natural outworking of the earliest Christian trajectories. If it is the case that the church from the beginning was a "culture" in the midst of the nations, existing as an eschatological city with a new public order, occupying public space, constituting a *polis* in its own right modeled on biblical Israel, then with the rise of actual physical space and a concrete material culture around AD 200, it should come as no surprise that this renewed Israel-*polis* should come to understand its ministerial leadership as the typological fulfillment of Israel's priesthood. My hope is that the evidence presented here will help broaden our understanding of the development of a Christian ministerial priesthood in light of this religio-political ecclesiology and the emergence of Christian material culture, offering a fuller examination of an old topic.

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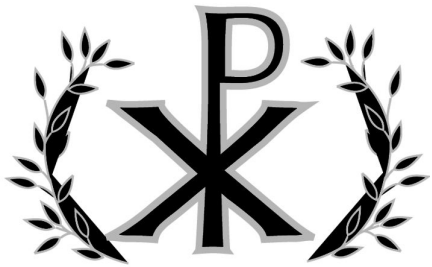

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